NF

ISSUE #66: ROOTING FOR THE LITTLE GUY!

THE HISTORY OF **PIKMIN**

**THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:** TEARS OF THE KINGDOM **REVIEWED!**

**ACTUAL SIZE:** HOW VIDEO GAME HEROES REALLY MEASURE UP!

**XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 3:** FUTURE REDEEMED

**THE SUPER MARIO BROS. MOVIE** BOX OFFICE RESULTS

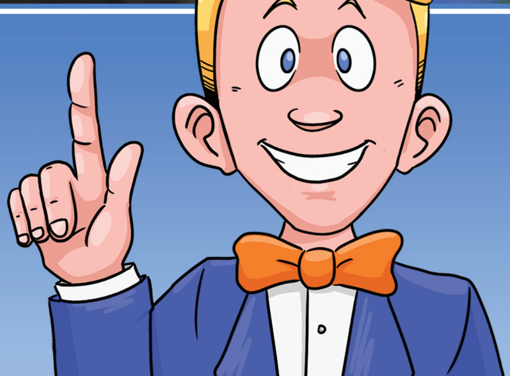
**SUPER MARIO BROS. WONDER**

**SUPER MARIO RPG**

**DOUBLE DRAGON GAIDEN:** RISE OF THE DRAGONS

**WE LOVE KATAMARI** REROLL + ROYAL REVERIE

JULY/ AUGUST 2023



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

# HOWARD PHILLIPS

# FINAL COUNTDOWN!

**THE KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN** for our first-ever book has been an incredible success so far!

After launching on the afternoon of May 30, we managed to hit our funding goal in less than two days! Thank you to all of you wonderful Nintendo Force Magazine subscribers who were a part of that very first push!

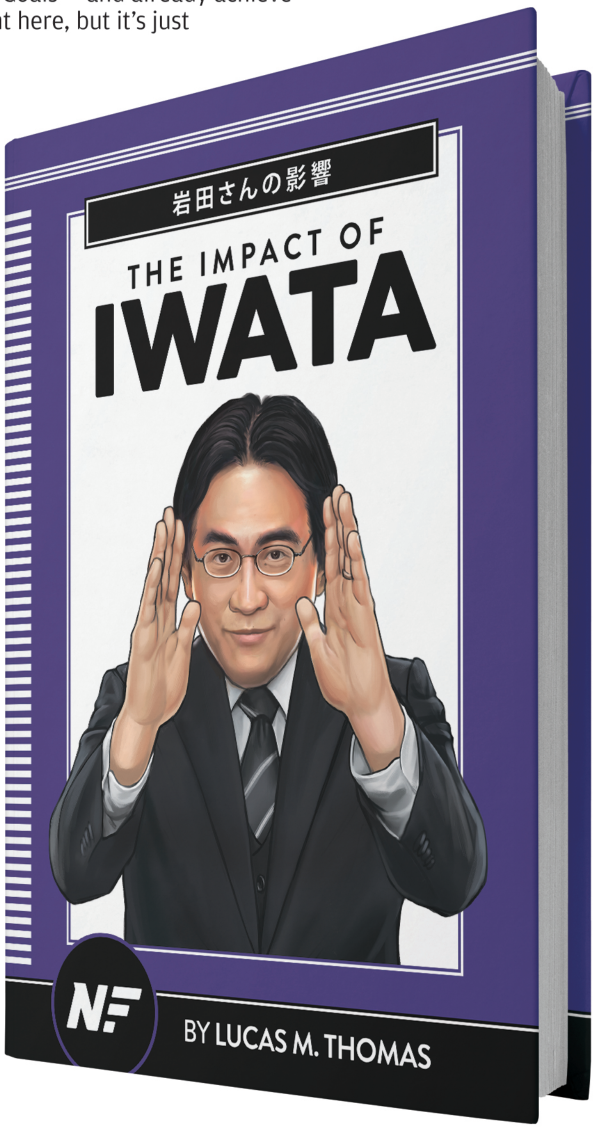
But that was only the beginning! In the weeks that have followed, the funding total has steadily continued to climb, which has allowed us to pursue Stretch Goals — and already achieve several of those as well! I'm overusing the exclamation point here, but it's just been a fantastic crowdfunding experience so far!

As we're finalizing this issue of Nintendo Force, the Kickstarter for The Impact of Iwata is still active, so I can't report a final total yet.

. . . *However,* that means there's also still time for you to get your pledge in too, if you haven't already! If the timing of this issue landing in most subscribers' mailboxes works out the way it should, there should still be just a handful of days left before the curtain falls and the campaign comes to an end. So you'll have to move fast, but hopefully you can still make it, getting in just under the wire!

Pledging to the Kickstarter for The Impact of Iwata is the equivalent of preordering your copy of our first book — just like with our magazines, you can choose the digital version, the physical version, or both! The different pledge tiers also offer a variety of cool extra items, like bookmarks, art print postcards, a chance to get your name printed in a special Backers section of every copy, and more!

Some free bonuses will be going out to Kickstarter supporters too, thanks to hitting Stretch Goals. Get in now and you too can snag those, like a newly revised "Thank You, Mr. Iwata" double-sided wall poster, and the audiobook version too! Don't miss out! — **LUCAS**




**The campaign ends on July 13 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern time! Get your pledge in before then!**

**Kickstarter.com/Projects/NFPublishing/The-Impact-of-Iwata**

ISSUE #66:
ROOTING FOR THE
LITTLE GUY!

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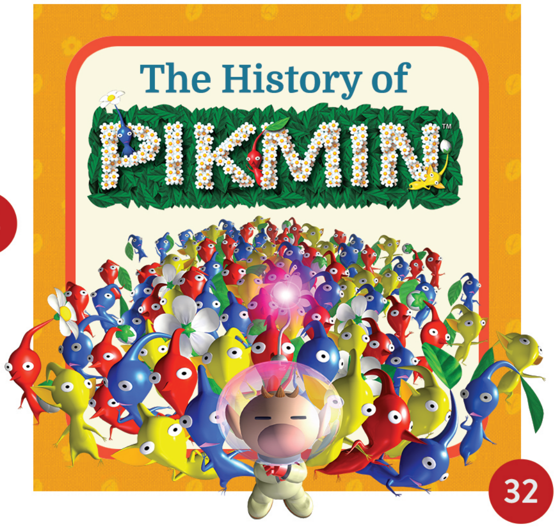


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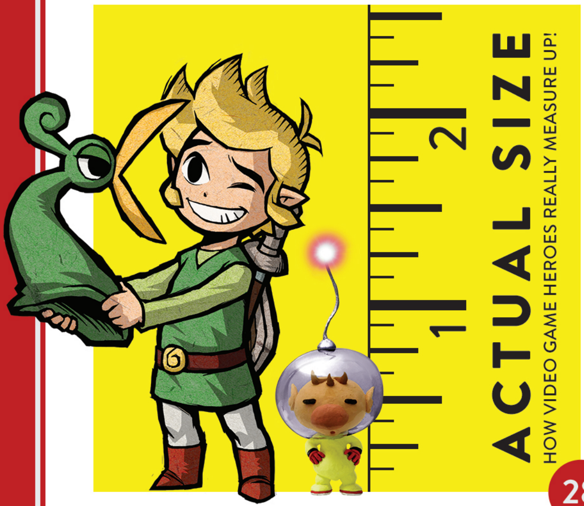


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## ON THE COVER

The Pikmin series claims the cover position for the first time in NF history! It's been a long wait to be sure. If we'd known so much time would pass between the releases of Pikmin 3 and Pikmin 4, then we probably would have put Pikmin 3 on the cover of NF Issue #4 a decade ago! That spot went to Mario & Luigi: Dream Team, though, which ended up being the only cover that series ever got . . . and it's unlikely that series will ever have another opportunity. Unlike Pikmin! It took a long time, but now it's here!

# TINY BUT MIGHTY

Video games are made to make you feel victorious. They're at their best when, after playing them, a deep sense of pride wells up within you – after you overcome an obstacle, or beat a big boss.

"Big" being the operative word there. One of the ways video games get to their goal of making you feel huge feelings is by putting you in command of characters who are seriously smaller than their opponents.

I mean, just think about a random assortment of final battles from various games you've played. The enemy you were facing was almost always towering over you, right? Nobody's going to feel too terribly accomplished if the credits rolled after stepping on a bug. It has to be toppling some grand tower of a foe to really hit that emotional high point!

. . . And then there are some video games that go another step further. We're talking games in which the heroes you control are physically tiny. Like, incredibly small, when compared to normal human scale. Characters that have to crane their necks up just to see the top of a blade of grass. Little guys!

It's just so natural to want to cheer for these underdogs, and to want to guide them to victory when games let us become them. With the release of Pikmin 4 just over the horizon – the latest sequel in a series that's full of miniature heroes – we've set the theme of this NF edition as "Rooting for the Little Guy!"

Inside you'll find tons of Pikmin coverage, from a full History of Pikmin feature to our final preview of Pikmin 4, reviews of the just-launched rereleases of Pikmin 1 and 2 on the Switch and a Retro section Lost in Untranslation article covering a trio of Pikmin games I'm almost certain you've never played before. We've also got a feature called Actual Size, where we're taking advantage of our print media format to actually print some pictures of various video game heroes at their tiny canon heights! All that and more packed into this simple, small stack of paper pages. It's kind of a big deal!

LUCAS M. THOMAS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ISSUE #65:
MAY/JUNE 2023

Our Tears of the Kingdom issue has become one of our most popular ever! (Maybe because Ganondorf posed for "Hyrule Health" on the back cover?) We've got another piece of great art featuring everyone's favorite revived Demon King leading into our review of the game in this issue. But before you flip there, why not stick around here for a while to read the responses our readers sent in to the Player's Poll?

We first asked if you've ever played any Pikmin games before, and, if not, are you planning to make Pikmin 4 your first? Then we looked ahead to this issue's theme to ask a "little guy" question: If you could shrink in size like Ant-Man, what would you do with that kind of superpower? Finally, we wanted your creative ideas for new kinds of Pikmin. If you could make a new variety of Pikmin yourself, what would it be like? Read on:

## LETTERS

I played a little bit of Pikmin 3 on the Wii U! I think it's creative. It's unlike anything I've played before. I definitely have to finish it sometime before Pikmin 4 is out.

To be completely honest, I would probably rob a bank. I would be too small to get caught! I would be set for life, lol!

I would invent a Pikmin that could grow into a giant. Basically like a Mega Mushroom for a Pikmin. I think that would be a cool idea! **– MADDIX DASILVA**

Have you seen the prices of groceries lately? These days, I find myself practically sweating at the checkout as the total gets higher and higher with each item scanned. If I could shrink down to the size of a Pikmin, I could feast on a tiny amount of "giant" food. I'd hardly have to spend a dime on groceries! Problem solved! Of course, this all hinges on whether or not the food inside me grows along with me whenever I return to normal size . . .
**– STEVEN AMISON**

Dear NF, I've played Pikmin 3 on Wii U and (briefly) played the original on Wii, and I thought Pikmin was an interesting idea (although I've never finished it).

If I could shrink myself, I'd probably stuff my face with soda and cookies, and I'd create a Pikmin that could turn invisible. **– HENRY L.**

I recently played through Pikmin 3 Deluxe as my first full Pikmin playthrough; I tinkered with the first game as a kid, but I couldn't wrap my head around it back then. I'm glad I played the third game, though, as it provided a really unique, interesting experience.

If I could shrink myself, I would use that power to make it so that people couldn't find me and bug me whenever I just want some time to myself.

How about Sun Pikmin? They could make plants in the environment bloom to allow access to new areas, and they could make the other Pikmin around them grow their flowers without the need for honey. (Though it would take quite a while or else it would be really overpowered.) **– ANDREW PEERMAN**

I've played all the Pikmin games. I like that there are multiple types of Pikmin, so it's fun to solve all of the different challenges with them. I especially like Rock Pikmin because they look funny.

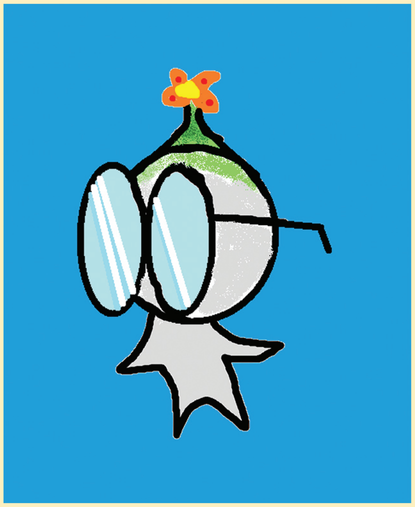
I would walk around to look at all of my action figures to see how big they would look compared to mini me. I would also swim in a cup of water because it would be huge!

I would make a Rainbow Pikmin that could change into any of the other Pikmin, but would only last for one day.
**– OWEN MCCULLOUGH**

I love Pikmin and am absolutely thrilled we are finally getting Pikmin 4!

If I was shrunk down? I would probably explore my closet to find missing items I lost years ago.

I would invent Wind Pikmin, where instead of flying, they can breathe massive gusts of wind to push blocks or weaker enemies. **– DAVID O'BRIEN**



## A PIKMIN WITH SUPERIOR EYESIGHT!

I have not played a Pikmin game before, but was thinking about them when reading your magazine Nintendo Force. This is my first one I've ever read. I wanted to try a crowd control game like Pikmin, but never got one since I am focused on other big games like Splatoon 3 and Tears of the Kingdom.

I would start a repair store for technology, being able to shrink down to inch-small levels. I'd be able to hide if in danger – just jump into the nearest crack between two things and wait whatever is happening out.

I would invent a Pikmin that can scout out an area ahead for danger, but can't attack and is incredibly weak and rare, not knowing much. I don't know if a Pikmin like this exists.

This is the first magazine of yours I've gotten and I'm looking forward to the rest to come! **– MYER PHELPS, AGE 11**

**I like your idea of a glasses-wearing Recon Pikmin! Having a specialized bespectacled soldier who can safely identify threats before you march your full fighting force into the fray would be incredibly helpful!**

Have I played Pikmin? At least the three main games. And I adore them – Pikmin 2 ranking right up there as a game I can play constantly without growing tired of it.

As for what I'd do with shrinking powers: eat larger-than-my-head food portions! I could finally make a "Fun Size" candy bar live up to its name!

My own kind of Pikmin isn't too special. It's just a little taller than average, and it could use the flat leaves on its head to shield your party from attacks or bridge gaps. Possibly leading to an enemy gauntlet that you'd have to get through without being able to defeat anything. Relying on a mixture of stealth and friendly fire to reach your reward! **– ALEX WINTER**

I have played every Pikmin game there is. I am a very big fan of the series!

I would sneak into places I wasn't allowed to go to, and it would make things a lot easier. I could just eat one crumb and be full, and for other things like showers, I would only need a droplet of water, soap and shampoo, and it would take seconds. It would save a lot of money.

I've had multiple ideas for new Pikmin before, but one that usually comes to mind after a while is the Climbing Pikmin. These rare species are hard to get many of, as their cap would be 50. They have long stems, and drag objects instead of carrying them. Cooperation with others would be hard for them. Because of their long stems, they can move around while carrying things, meaning they aren't gonna die as easily. They can hop over walls, but are hard to control from there. They don't use their hands for anything, only their claw-like flower, and they're immune to water. Their "claws" are great for long ranged attacks, but if they stick to a surface, they will be hard to shake off. Climbing Pikmin would be brown in color, and discovered in a secret area accessible using only Yellow Pikmin and good observation. **– HAYDEN**

I'm pretty familiar with Pikmin, yet I haven't played any of the games! I've watched the Pikmin short movies countless times, and I've watched my brother play Pikmin 2 and 3. I'm going to play 3 soon, and I really want to play 4! (I think it will be worth the wait.)

If I'm super small I might as well eat a lot of food since one piece of pizza would seem like a lot more!

As a huge Sonic fan, and my favourite color being green, I think I would make some sort of Green Pikmin that is super fast!!

I can't wait to read Issue #66! Your magazine is super awesome! **– SILAS H.**

Hi Mr. NF!

I haven't played the Pikmin games myself, but I've watched my older brother play a couple of them. I'll probably watch him play this one too, since he'll probably get it. I think the Pikmin are super cute and the idea of the planet they're on being post-apocalyptic Earth is cool!

I've always thought that if I was able to change my size, that I'd sew cool clothes for myself when I'm small and bring them to normal size after, so that it would take up less fabric. Though, this is assuming that the size change affects clothes too!

Paper Pikmin! I'm a big fan of Paper Mario, so I'd make flat Pikmin with all the abilities Mario uses in The Thousand-Year Door! The color wouldn't really matter, since its special thing would be that it's flat, but maybe red since it's based on Mario. **– KYLA H.**

If I was the size of a Pikmin I think I'd want to do something funny like leave a random thing in random places at random times that couldn't have gone there by itself! Now that would be confusing. If I could invent a new Pikmin . . . maybe I would want a telepathic Pikmin that can sense danger and read the thoughts of the monsters they fight. Who knows, maybe that thing isn't trying to eat them, he's just trying to ask for help with his tummy ache! **– GINA**

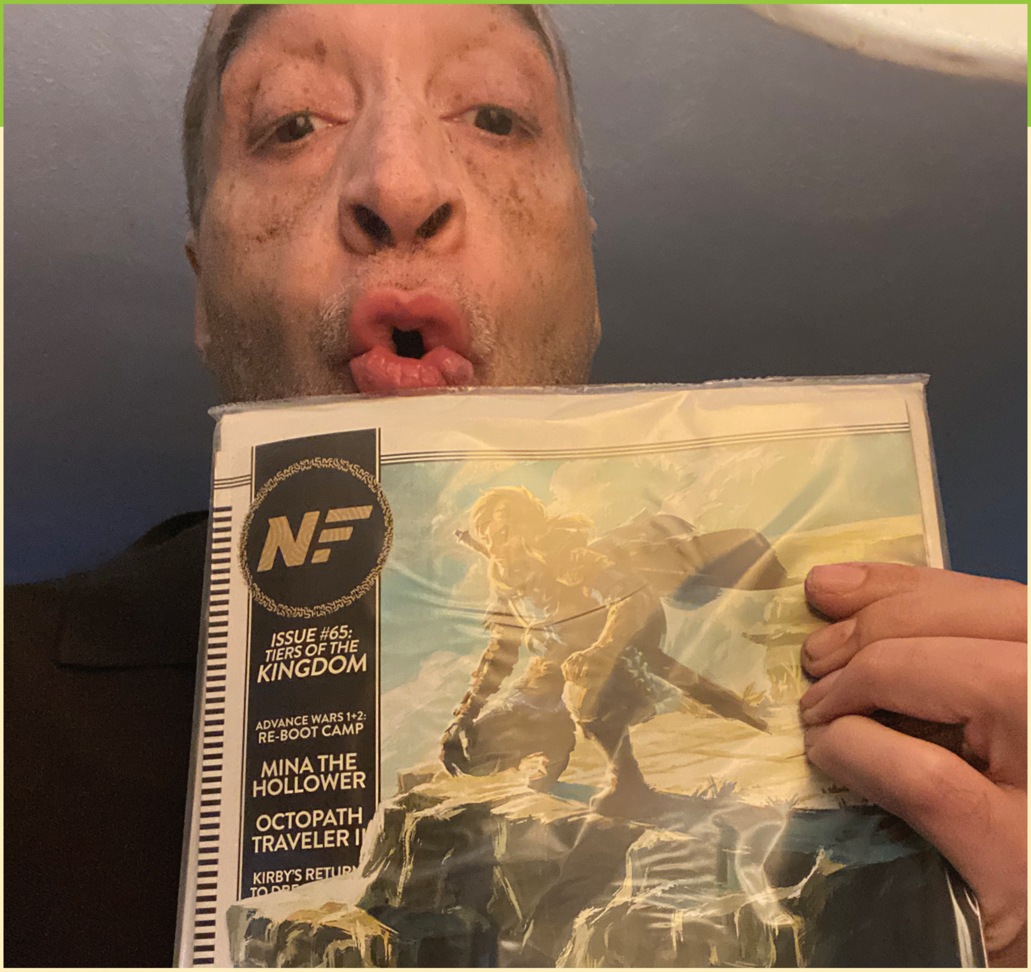
## CARTER'S CORNER

Hello again!

This was probably my easiest quiz yet. Of course there's a 50-Coin in Truly Impossible! But how do you get it? Enter the hidden pipe (not near the start, sorry) and you'll drop on the goal. But if you have Yoshi, you can hop off him to nab the coin above the pipe.

Now let's talk about the very best NPC in The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom. Hopefully you thought "ADDISON!!!" at that very moment! This guy is in several places around Hyrule holding signs advertising his boss, President Hudson. You must use the Ultrahand ability to create some kind of support structure to hold the sign in place. (It's fun because building materials and sign shapes vary.) When President Hudson is standing proud and firmly in place, Addison usually gives you 20 Rupees, some food and a rare item like a Bomb Flower. Now I want Addison as my Halloween costume!

How about two quizzes this time? What is the only other mainline Zelda game I played besides Tears of the Kingdom? And how many dungeons will I have beaten in Tears of the Kingdom by the time this issue gets to you? (Don't guess zero! Whoa! Unforgivable!) See you next time!




## REST IN PEACE, JAMES HOLMES: 1970 – 2023

This issue of Nintendo Force is dedicated to James Holmes, Jonathan's big brother who passed away suddenly in May. The photo above, Jonathan says, was the last ever taken of him: a selfie he snapped of himself and sent to his little brother to celebrate his work in this very magazine, and to get him hyped up to see his words and art printed in the latest issue!

Our siblings are our first friends in this life. And while growing up and growing apart almost always strains those relationships, it's comforting that, for many, playing video games together as kids remains a constant, wholesome memory. James, thanks for being Jonathan's first friend, and for lifting up and encouraging your little brother one last time before leaving this world.

# THE PLAYER'S POLL

Congratulations to **Maddix DaSilva**, the winner of our most recent Player's Poll! Your new chance to win is below, and this time around we're interested to read your responses to three questions about the Sonic the Hedgehog series!

### QUESTION #1

Are you a fan of the Sonic franchise? If so, what was the first Sonic game you ever played? If not, have you given it a chance before?

### QUESTION #2

Video games sometimes present their action in 2D, and sometimes in 3D. Which of the two styles gets you more excited?

### QUESTION #3

If you were tasked to make a new animal friend to pal around with Sonic, what kind of animal would you pick, and what would their name be?

Send your responses to **PlayersPoll@NFMagazine.com** with the subject line "Player's Poll for Issue #67" – this time, one reader whose answers are picked for print will win the new Sonic Superstars for Nintendo Switch. Good luck!

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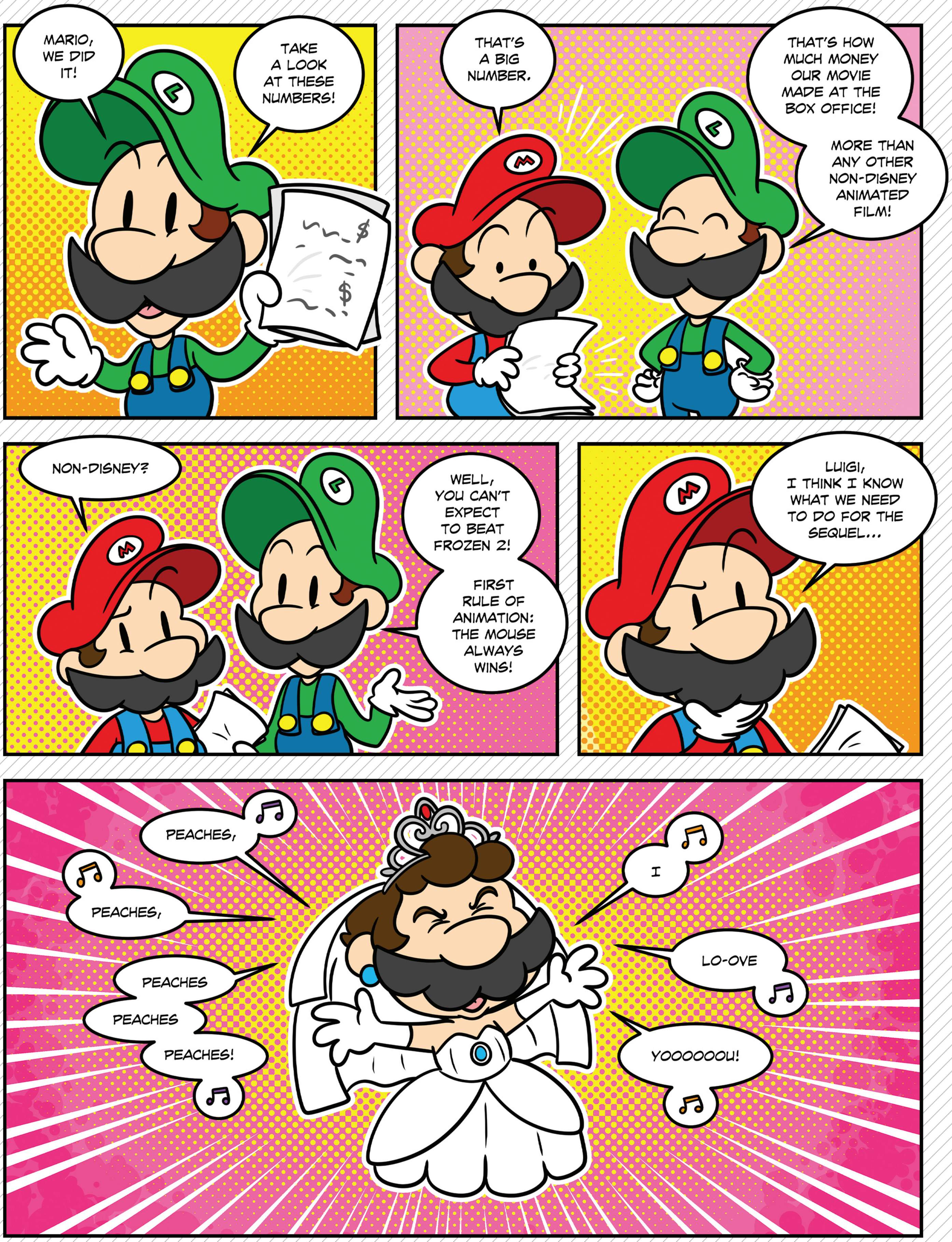



BY MATTHEW LOFFHAGEN

# Record-Shattering Box Office Success!

## The Super Mario Bros. Movie has exceeded even the most extreme expectations!

**WHEN YOU SEE** something you love doing well, it's always a good time.

When I took my family to see the movie, upon exiting the theater I knew it was something special. However, I'm pretty biased when it comes to Mario, so it's amazing to see how far this little flick went. But who could have predicted just how well The Super Mario Bros. Movie would do in ticket sales? Second-highest-grossing animated film of all-time? Beating Frozen and only just getting beaten out by Frozen II?!

The movie made big headlines on its opening weekend when it gained the title of biggest five-day opening of all-time at $200,000,000. While that seems huge, many other movies have not had five-day windows and have earned more, but it's still a nice bullet point. It is also the highest-grossing film for Illumination and the biggest opening of 2023 (so far). It also earned the title of the biggest opening for a video game movie ever, beating both Sonic films and Detective Pikachu. It hit the magic $500,000,000 domestic earnings mark to be named a block-buster, even in the post-pandemic era. It's also the third-biggest release for Universal, with E.T. and Jurassic World as the only films above it.

It started releasing in other regions and it broke records there as well! It smashed a Japanese record, netting over ¥10,000,000,000 (that's around $71,000,000) in its first 31 days, a record for a non-Japanese animation studio. In Mexico, it's the country's highest-grossing film of all time!

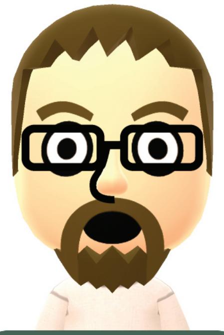
Then we all watched it climb and climb and climb to Coin Heaven! There was chatter it could break the billion-dollar mark, which far surpassed any expectation the studio had projected on their $100,000,000 investment. Then the chatter became reality, and the final tally as of this writing is $1,315,000,000. I bet they're glad they left it open for a sequel now!

This is in stark contrast with the original 1993 film, which only earned $38,900,000 worldwide but had a budget of $48,000,000 (that's around $82,000,000 and $100,000,000 adjusted for inflation, respectively).

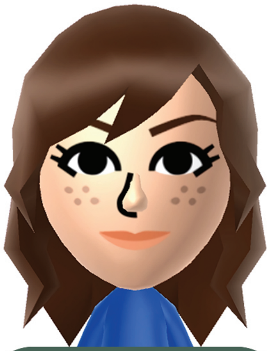
Part of the success of the new film is thanks to it satisfying the four quad-rants of cinema appeal: Male and female, young and old. With the games still very popular among all age brackets and with Mario being a household name, it's obvious to see that a movie that everyone could enjoy was there all along. It's Illumination's handling of the IP that allowed it to succeed – and many people ignoring what the film critics had to say about it!

This is all before disc-based sales and streaming rights, so the Mario movie has even more money to earn as time rolls on. Also worth noting, as we're talking records, is that Jack Black's single "Peaches" debuted on the U.S. Billboard Top 100 at #83 and peaked at #56, which also made it Black's first single to ever chart.

For all-time global grossing films in cinematic history, The Super Mario Bros. Movie's earnings soared to the 18th spot, surpassing Universal's own Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom. This would suggest we're at the beginning of an era in Hollywood where video game movie adaptations – if done well and following the source material – can be respected and make mountains of cash! **– BRETT**



> "After seeing it in theaters once, my kids were begging me to see it again. It's great to see it being enjoyed by so many people!" – BRETT



> "I've been a fan of Dungeons & Dragons for over a decade now. I've loved seeing how popular tabletop gaming has become over the years, and how it's meshed so well with video games in different ways too! – **MAGGIE**"

# GANONDORF, THE DUNGEON MASTER

## Critical Role crosses over with The Legend of Zelda for a one-shot adventure!

**ZELDA'S LEGEND HAS** been told through many mediums, from video games and television to novels and manga. Now, a tabletop gaming show has added its own take on Hyrule and everything that goes with it!

Through a collaboration with Nintendo to celebrate the release of Tears of the Kingdom, the D&D gaming pros at Critical Role presented "The Legend of Zelda One-Shot: Lookout, Here We Come!" on June 1.

The five-hour show featured a one-off adventure set in the Zelda universe using a custom version of the Powered by the Apocalypse tabletop RPG system. It included mechanics inspired by Zelda game systems, including hearts representing the characters' hit points and a stamina management system.

Critical Role dungeon master and Ganondorf voice actor Matthew Mercer led the game, which included locales, monsters and characters from the series. Players included Marisha Ray, Emily Axford, Omar Najam, Liam O'Brien and Robbie Daymond.

Their party was composed of Rito, Goron, Zora and Hylian characters, who each had their own special abilities, quirky personalities and heartfelt moments as the game went on.

Their journey began after the events of Breath of the Wild, when the people of Hyrule are in an era of rebuilding and expansion. The adventurers are part of a research group working under Purah and tasked with investigating mysteries in the land.

They first set off on a trip to find some Zonai Ruins, navigating through locales like the Faron jungle and Finra Woods, fighting off Lizalfos, Keese, Chuchus and more (and dealing with weapon durability along the way). Their journey also took them on a wild ride in a Construct cart and a rescue mission in a Bokoblin camp.

The fun callbacks came out in full force too. Daymond's character Dink spins in circles to cut grass and barrel rolls every few feet while running into combat, and Axford's character Babs is a devoted employee of the Hudson Construction Company.

If you're a Zelda fan, you'll appreciate the care and detail put into this one-shot. You can watch it via Critical Role's YouTube channel! **– MAGGIE**

## A Pokémon Collector's Nightmare

### With these new Pikachu plushes, it'll be impossible to catch 'em all!

**CREATING PERHAPS THE** most torturous collecting ordeal imaginable, the Pokémon Center is releasing a line of Pikachu plushes where each and every individual plush released is unique. While it's an interesting take on a new line, it's odd coming from a company that first created a fever for this brand with "Gotta catch 'em all!"

Now, I know that there are a billion previously released Pikachu plushes already out there, and it would be impossible to collect this line, so let's just take a back seat on this one. It's brilliant being able to have your own unique Pikachu coming from a stack of other Pikachus in a store. The Japan-only store will even pick one at random and reveal the customer's unique Pikachu from a cabinet if they can't pick one themselves!

## Mamma Mio!

### Now you too can flaunt your flautist!

**GOOD SMILE COMPANY** and Max Factory have announced that they'll be releasing a premium Mio figure from Xenoblade Chronicles 3 in February 2024. Mio will be around $100 and will be released with several extra parts for posability options. Four faces, including shouting and smiling faces, will accompany four sets of hands to hold her various accessories. She will come with her trademark Moonblades, a diary and a flute. She will have an optional long hair part as well, creating even more possibilities!

Pre-orders opened in May, but they're likely still available from importers. Many of these have been coming stateside, so a little patience might net you a smaller price tag, but not by much. You mostly save on shipping. I wish more of the characters from this series would receive this premium figure treatment!

BY BRETT MARTIN

# LEGO Donkey Kong!

## Expand beyond the LEGO Mushroom Kingdom with DK's playsets!

**FOUR SETS WILL** kick off the Donkey Kong spin-off line of LEGO Super Mario. Donkey Kong and Cranky Kong come with the iconic Kong treehouse (along with a Warp Pipe and flagpole that just seem out of place).

The largest LEGO DK set features Diddy and Funky Kong in a mine cart level. Funky's shop – which is built out of an airplane – even features 1-Up balloons! A mole and a shark are the only enemies in any of the sets, so the lack of Kremlings is a disappointment.

Dixie and Squawks have a small set where they're on a stage with a mic and guitar, and the last set features Rambi and three boulders. Apparently Mario can interact with Rambi to hear rhino crashing sounds? Some odd choices, but they look great. Hopefully a Round 2 will bring more!

# Upgraded Model

## Kotobukiya's revised Rockman is looking more Mega than ever!

**KOTOBUKIYA IS RELEASING** a Mega Man model kit featuring his newest look from Mega Man 11 and promising more articulation and posability. He will have a Mega Buster shot, a slide effect piece, four hands and four facial expressions. The figure even has a helmetless option so you can see his synthetic hair! The website makes a big deal about how much they have changed from their original Classic-look Mega Man kit, and it does look stunning. But from owning and building Kotobukiya's previous model kits, I hope they have put equal effort into making it less cumbersome to build! It takes significant work to make them look as good as the product shots here, but they look good simply snap-built too. Check out the recently released Second Armor, Max Armor and Blade Armor from the X series for more Mega fun!

# amiibo UPDATE

**IT'S MID-YEAR 2023** and here I am still reporting on amiibo news, and it is so good. We're nearing the 10-year mark of toys-to-life longevity for Nintendo! A delightful dang-near decade of delectable DLC-driven dividends!

The Link amiibo that was released alongside Tears of the Kingdom has been giving players in-game loot since launch, and it is such a beautiful figure. A bevy of Link amiibos from his various other adventures have been re-released and are also aiding in the battle against Ganondorf. A number of these – most notably the ones based on Ocarina of Time – hadn't been reissued and had been selling for high prices for a while. I'm glad that they brought them back and people are getting another chance at retail pricing. The outfits, paraglider fabrics, and even mascot head gear (I'm looking at you, Link's Awakening Remake Link) have been a joy to see across the Internet as well. I just need more arrows. Do any of them give more arrows?

Coming soon to store shelves are the Pyra and Mythra amiibos, launching in a two-pack set on July 21. That will leave one lone Super Smash Bros. Ultimate DLC fighter that has yet to receive an amiibo announcement, and that is Sora. They wouldn't think of skipping Sora and depriving us of a complete set of amiibo from the Smash line . . . would they? The lack of an announcement is very concerning.

Pyra and Mythra originally hail from the Xenoblade series, of course, and that franchise will be fueling the amiibo-collecting fires further in the future: Nintendo has announced that both Noah and Mio from Xenoblade Chronicles 3 will be getting the amiibo treatment! Why did they wait until their game was already nearly a year old to announce them, and when are they going on sale? We don't know either answer! But amiibo Mio will surely be a more affordable option than Good Smile Mio.

Lastly, in a surprise announcement toward the end of the June Nintendo Direct, Zelda and Ganondorf amiibos using their Tears of the Kingdom looks were revealed. Functionality will likely be similar to the above amiibo, and no release info was given other than "Holiday 2023."

# An All-New All-Ages Nintendo Event!

## Family-friendly fun comes to Seattle for four days at the beginning of September.

**THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST** is calling!

If you happen to live in that area – or you have the means to travel there and bring your whole family along – Nintendo has a brand-new event planned that you may want to attend. "Nintendo Live 2023 Seattle" is a four-day spectacle celebrating Nintendo games and the recent success of the Switch, with an itinerary that seems packed to overflowing with different things to see and do.

Demo kiosks galore will allow attendees to play everything from recently released Switch hits like Tears of the Kingdom and Pikmin 4 to a set of old-school classics running through Nintendo Switch Online's retro apps. A "Mario Dojo" will let showgoers face off against each other in competitions of Mario Kart 8 Deluxe and Super Mario Maker 2. (Probably with some snazzy prizes for the winners!)

Grander-scale competitions will also be a part of Nintendo Live, with four big tournaments set to take place on the big stage, including the 2023 Championships for both Splatoon 3 and Mario Kart 8 Deluxe. There will also be two Smash Ultimate tournies, one of which will be an "amiibo + me" tournament just for players between the ages of 10 and 16.

How about some live music? Both the Mario and Zelda franchises will get their own soundtrack celebrations, with live performances of songs from both series being belted out from the main stage.

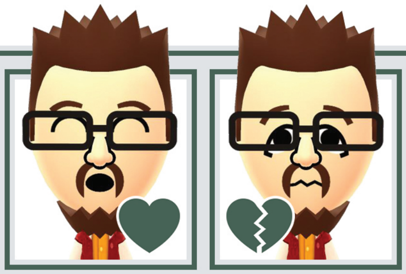
While your ears enjoy the tunes, there will be plenty for your eyes to take in as well, with costumed characters available for photo ops, set-apart spaces built to look like pieces of famous game worlds, the full Super Smash Bros. Ultimate mural in giant real-life size and more. A lot more!

. . . Which is why it's a bummer that so few people will be able to attend.

Nintendo's been operating a kind of random lottery on Nintendo.com for just a chance to get tickets to this supersized soirée, meaning that while plenty of people will be interested in going, only a handful will actually be allowed through the door. That lottery has already ended, too, as this issue is being finalized, so if you're just now finding out about this whole thing, I'm sorry that you've missed out on going!

However, the "2023 Seattle" part of the event's name points to further Nintendo Lives to come in future years and other cities. So if the Pacific Northwest doesn't call you after all, there's hope for tomorrow! **— LUCAS**

**Great!** Nintendo Live looks like it'll be a whole lot of fun!



**Oh.** Most people who want to go probably won't get to.

# FORECAST

A meteorological look at the biggest game and DLC releases currently scheduled to debut in the next few months.

**THE INFAMOUS SEQUEL** to 1-2-Switch that nearly everyone thought would get cancelled because it tested so poorly among even Nintendo's own internal teams is, instead, actually going to ship to stores. It'll show up there on June 30 . . . and maybe it'll stay there, if nobody decides to buy it! Given the lack of confidence surrounding this release, we've granted it just half a page for a preview on Page 52. Approach with caution.

**TRAILS FANS CAN** feel much more confident about this installment in their beloved series due to debut on July 7 – it looks like it'll be a great one, and especially from a story point of view, since it's set to bring together multiple arcs from past titles, uniting them to blaze an even better Trail as one! Our preview is ready to read over on Page 48.

**THE COVER GAME** for this NF edition is a grand adventure on a small scale: Pikmin 4, set to officially launch on July 21. In support of this long-awaited sequel, we've prepared a whole History of Pikmin feature beginning on Page 32, and following that you'll find a four-page final preview beginning on Page 41. Get yourself acquainted with all the Pikmin types, especially if you're a newcomer to the series!

**JULY ISN'T USUALLY** a super impressive month when it comes to new video game launches, but this year July is kinda killin' it! After Trails and Pikmin send out their latest hits, we'll get the next installment of the venerable Double Dragon series on July 27. It's got a brand-new art style, so take a first look over on Page 50!

**JUST ONE PAGE** later on Page 51, you'll find our preview for the game launching just one day later, on July 28. It's the revival of the old-school Illusion series starring Mickey Mouse! (And Minnie Mouse, and Donald Duck, and Goofy . . . Dog? Why did Goofy never get a last name?) Anyway, Disney Illusion Island looks mostly amazing, but I do have one key concern. Read about that in the preview ahead!

**LASTLY FOR THIS** Forecast list, we're skipping right over the month of August and landing on September 13, the date when Konami is planning to unleash Super Bomberman R 2 on the explosives-loving gamers of the world. We haven't seen a new Bomberman game since the Switch launch, so I'm excited to see what they've done with it! Page 47.

> Nintendo has allayed everyone's fears that the Switch wouldn't get much more software after the release of Pikmin 4, as beyond the games listed just above, the rest of 2023 is also already filled out with further surefire hits like Super Mario RPG, WarioWare: Move It! and Super Mario Bros. Wonder. We've got our first looks at each of those in the Previews section this time too. Carry on, Switch! Keep the momentum moving! – **LUCAS**

**IN EARLY 2020,** mere weeks before the world would really begin to get rocked by the impact of Covid-19, the developers at PlatinumGames turned to Kickstarter to crowdfund a new port of their Wii U action game The Wonderful 101. At the time I thought it was a little silly for them to do so – it seemed like the Remastered work was already done! But running the Kickstarter did allow them to drum up hype for the rerelease, as well as push for Stretch Goals to fund truly new content development. Like new missions starring Luka!

Now available as free DLC for owners of The Wonderful 101: Remastered, the two-part story of "The Wonderful One: After School Hero" tells the tale of little Luka when he was even littler than in the main game: It's apparently a prequel tale! We'll put it through its paces and bring you a full review in our next issue.

# The Blade-Wielding Bunny is Back!

## Miyamoto Usagi joins the TMNT in the all-new Shredder's Revenge DLC, Dimension Shellshock!

**2023 IS THE** Year of the Rabbit! (Now in more ways than one.)

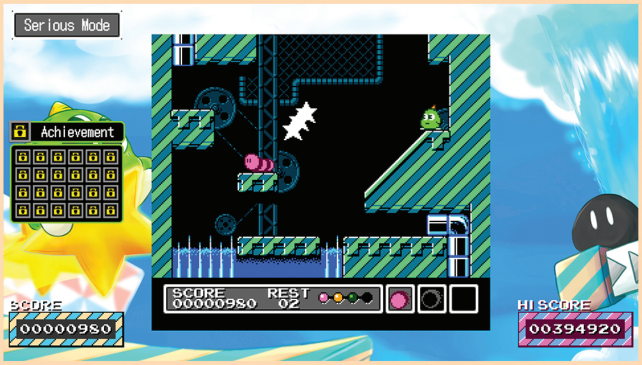
Because Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge enjoyed phenomenal sales success (deservedly so), the game we named NF's 2022 Game of the Year is getting new DLC here in 2023. Its first order of business is adding a playable Miyamoto Usagi!

DLC PUBLISHER: DOTEMU
DEVELOPER: TRIBUTE GAMES
RELEASE: TBA 2023 RATING: E10+

Also known as Usagi Yojimbo (even though that's the name of the comic he came from, not directly his own name), this samurai rabbit popped up as an ally for the Turtles a couple of times in the classic 1987 TMNT toon, and he's been a fan favorite ever since. He's a natural choice to join the playable cast!

. . . And it looks like the Turtles will need the extra help to deal with Shredder's latest scheme. Following his defeat in the base game's story, old Tin Head's decided to try conquesting again — in different dimensions! Our heroes will leap through portals to chase him down throughout multiple realities, where they'll surely run into plenty of throwbacks to more of the TMNT's past games, comics and shows. (I can already spot more old action figure/toon characters lurking in the background of the screenshot below, like Scumbug and Ace Duck!)

Ace would've been my pick for another playable hero . . . I wonder who we'll get in addition to Usagi? The dev team has promised more than one new option on the character select screen. Maybe Mondo Gecko, thrashing around on his skateboard? Mona Lisa, for another female fighter? Or could they go beyond the '87 toon to bring us fighters like Venus, Jennika or The Last Ronin? With the multiverse in the mix, anything goes! **— LUCAS**




# The Stars Aligned

## Gimmick! Special Edition will land in the States soon!

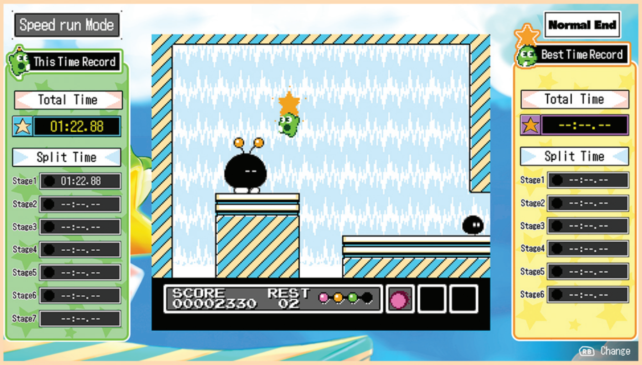
**AT THE TAIL** end of the Nintendo Entertainment System's life, Sunsoft made some rather impressive games that unfortunately never saw release in North America. They're looking to rectify that now, though, by diving into their back catalog to finally publish those lost classics for all to enjoy, and their next release is the cult classic Gimmick! (Or Mr. Gimmick, if you're from Scandinavia, the only other territory besides Japan to get the original game.)

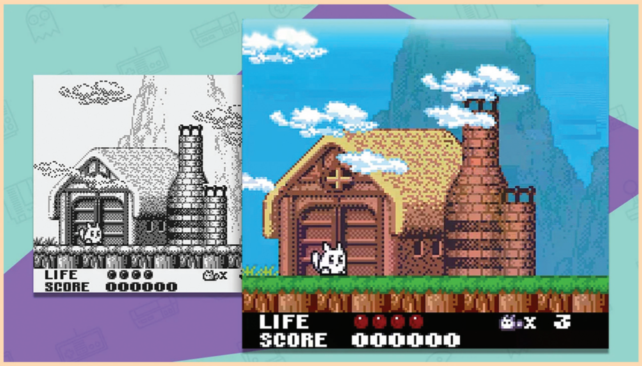
You play as an adorable green critter named Yumetaro who has the ability to create and throw stars, which is this game's gimmick, for lack of a better word. These stars move in a rather unusual pattern, and have more use than just as a projectile weapon. They can only be formed one at a time, and they hover over your head until you release the button. Once they are thrown, they bounce around like a ball, but not infinitely – they eventually run out of inertia and stop before disintegrating, at which point you can summon another one. This pattern is important to learn because you can, and often need to, use your stars as a mode of transportation. At first this can be very difficult to master, especially since Yumetaro has his own unique physics to get the hang of, but with enough practice you can pull off some incredibly cool moves.

Gimmick! is an eye-poppingly gorgeous 8-bit game that really pushed the NES hardware at the time, and its soundtrack is full of memorable tunes, but it's also an incredibly challenging and often unforgiving adventure, especially if you're trying to find all of the game's many well-hidden secrets in order to see its true ending. Thankfully, in addition to a number of impressive extras like cartridge scans, achievements and a speedrun mode, this new release will include modern tools like save states and a rewind function, which should make things a bit more reasonable.

This is one of the few remaining genuine hidden gems of the NES library, and it finally getting an official stateside release is great to see. If you like retro platformers, don't skip this game! **– KRIS**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER: BITWAVE GAMES DEVELOPERS: BITWAVE GAMES, CITY CONNECTION & SUNSOFT RELEASE: JULY 6, 2023 RATING: E




# Carbon Colorization

## Another of Sunsoft's little guys is back in Trip World DX!

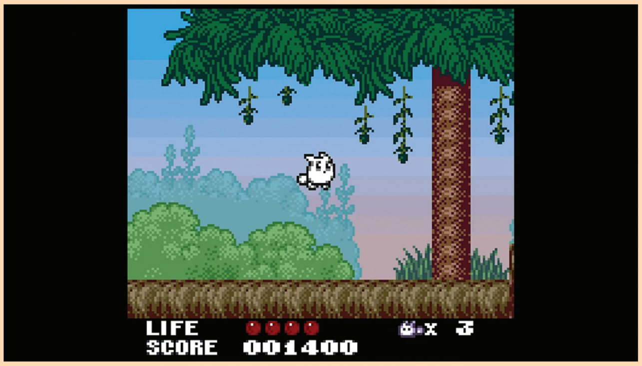
**TRIP WORLD MAY** not look like much at first glance, but it's one of the most unique Game Boy adventures ever made. It's also one of the rarest games on the platform, only ever having been released in Europe and Japan in relatively limited quantities.

Aside from being among the most impressive-looking Game Boy games in existence, Trip World stands out for its decidedly laid-back approach to gameplay. Instead of monsters who are out to attack you, most of the other creatures you encounter are just as peaceful as you are. They can get a bit defensive, but with the exception of boss characters, they likely won't attack you unless you attack them first. This results in a fairly easy adventure, but unlike most games from this era, just getting to the ending isn't really the point. This game is all about exploring the world while on your way to save it, and the near-constant look of wonder on main character Yakopoo's face is a testament to that. It's littered with secrets and beautiful environments, and its stellar soundtrack really pulls it all together to form a game that's truly something special.

Limited Run is publishing this new version using their Carbon Engine technology, and have worked closely with the original game's creator, Yuichi Ueda, to not only offer an authentic recreation of its monochrome form to a wider audience, but also create a brand-new version presented in full color! Trip World DX utilizes a Game Boy Color palette to create a more immersive iteration of its already impressive adventure, with each and every pixel having been painstakingly colorized from scratch in order to bring Ueda's original ideas for his characters to life like never before. The colorization was done by Iván Delgado (a.k.a. toruzz), who we interviewed back in Issue #32 about his work on Super Mario Land 2 DX!

With physical copies of Trip World's initial release selling for obscene amounts of money, this is an amazing opportunity to finally play one of Sunsoft's most overlooked titles, and one that was clearly ahead of its time. It's been said that Trip World is one of the best games Sunsoft ever released, which is a high bar. We'll see later this year if this new version can live up to that reputation! **– KRIS**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHERS/DEVELOPERS: LIMITED RUN GAMES & SUNSOFT RELEASE: TBA 2023 RATING: E



# Paws on Pavement

## Live your best nine lives in Little Kitty, Big City.

**OF THE THREE** cat-themed games in Nintendo's most recent Indie World presentation, Little Kitty, Big City seems to be the one players know the least about, but are anticipating the most. (Well, it's the one *I'm* anticipating the most, anyway.)

What we do know is that this is a third-person adventure game where you take on the role of a little domestic black kitty that has found itself far from home, and is quite curious about the big Japanese city it now finds itself in. Sure, getting home is its top priority . . . once it's done looking at *this!* And then *that over there!* But once that's done, it's time to head home . . . *after* investigating that one other thing, of course.

A popular point of reference is 2019's Untitled Goose Game, only the key difference here is that you're not a goose, but a cat. And that means doing cat stuff, like making friends, wearing hats (including a floppy green cap, similar to a certain Hyrulian hero's) and getting into mischief. You know their deal – jumping into boxes, chasing their tails, squeezing into holes, pouncing at birds, stealing stuff, climbing into places they don't belong and knocking things over. Heck, if the early trailer is anything to go by, you can even partake in a cat's favorite pastime: climbing all over someone's keyboard and aaf; fghayfuafafagif

. . . Ahem. Anyway, one can only imagine how big this game could turn out to be. People loved Untitled Goose Game, but are people as a whole even that fond of geese? Not like they are with cats! So the potential here is big.

Another game people bring up is 2022's award-winning cat simulator, Stray. But while that followed a stray cat through a dystopian setting, this one looks to be a lot brighter, more cheerful and quite a bit more lighthearted. Hmm . . . if we view this as a combination of Stray and Untitled Goose Game, we might even be looking at 2024's Game of the Year! I'll turn in my ballot now.

Little Kitty, Big City was originally only announced for Steam, but thankfully, the Switch is now another option. Assuming the little kitty doesn't get *too* distracted on its way, we should see it arrive sometime next year. **– DAVID**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: DOUBLE DAGGER GAMES
RELEASE: TBA 2024 RATING: E

# The Purrfect Puzzler

## Attract feline friends to win in Quilts and Cats of Calico!

**ALSO ANNOUNCED IN** that same Nintendo Indie World showcase was Quilts and Cats of Calico, a puzzle and strategy board game for up to four players that's based on the board game Calico.

The objective of the game is to form a quilt by assembling a variety of patterned fabric scraps. Combine the colors and patterns in the right ways, and you'll score not only more points from the completed quilt, but also sew-on buttons. You'll also attract some feline friends, who each have their own preferences for patterns upon which to place their paws for a pleasant catnap.

For those familiar with the original board game, there are a few twists in store here. Not only are the original gameplay scenarios here, but new rule and mechanic variations are waiting to be discovered in the campaign, set to a new score created by Pawel Gorniak, composer of Wingspan.

Inspired by the renowned works of Studio Ghibli, the single-player campaign places you in the role of a traveling tailor who ventures the war-torn world and sews quilts. As you create quilts, perfect your craft and assist those in need, you'll make friends and meet cats, whose help will prove invaluable as you stand up to a corporation that threatens your guild.

For those who want to engage with friends of the less-virtual variety in their quilting, cross-platform multiplayer will let you to take on your pals, or someone chosen at random. Weekly challenges and player rankings are included, too, so when you're confident in the skills you've honed solo, you can take on the world!

During gameplay, cats join in the fun, as their curiosity and unique characterizations lead them to partake in everything from checking out the patterns you're using to responding to what you do. They'll run and romp around the board, observe what's going on, or get comfy and go to sleep. You can interact with them, too, as you can pet them or shoo them away as needed. There are even customization options, allowing you to change everything from the name to the shape and the fluff of your companion. There are even outfits for them to wear!

This Fall, it's quiltin' time. And no, we're not kitten. **– DAVID**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHERS: MONSTER COUCH & FLATOUT GAMES
DEVELOPER: MONSTER COUCH RELEASE: FALL 2023 RATING: E

# Crafting Crafts & Catting Cats

## After nearly a decade of development, it looks like Mineko's Night Market is finally ready to open for business!

**FOR THE THIRD** cat-related game of the latest Indie World, Humble Games showed off a title that's coming to the Nintendo Switch – finally! – in the Fall of 2023: Mineko's Night Market.

Described as a game that's about "crafting crafts, eating eats," and most importantly of all, "catting cats," developer Meowza Games is promising a lot to do, spread across all four seasons of the year. You'll be invited to explore the vast island of Mt. Fugu, and perhaps even solve a few mysteries in the process.

You'll play as the titular character, Mineko, as she arrives at her new home on the Japan-inspired island. There, she'll be at work throughout the four seasons, making friends, solving mysteries and seeing what the island has to offer. That will also include solving puzzles, evading meddling secret agents and sneaking into restricted areas with a variety of disguises.

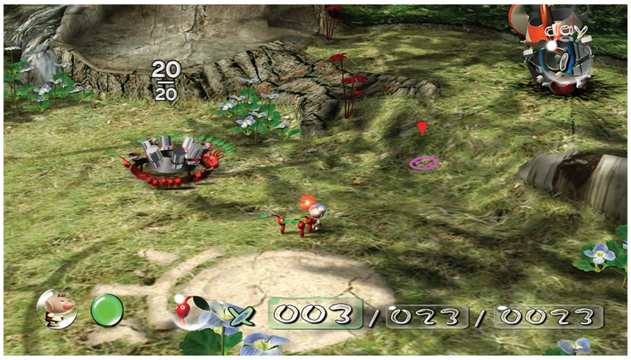
Perhaps one of them holds the key to finding out what's behind reports from the island's inhabitants that they've spotted the Sun Cat, Nikko, who the more superstitious natives worship. This is significant, because while Nikko once brought good fortune and prosperity to the island's people, he disappeared after being run off by impatient villagers who couldn't wait their turn for his gifts.

Throughout all of this, you'll be able to gather resources that you can use to craft "peculiar" items. The actual act of crafting these items will involve a variety of workbench mini-games that will hopefully make the grind a little more bearable. Once you have some items in hand, you'll be ready for the eponymous weekly Night Market, to which you'll travel in an effort to sell your goods. You'll be able to befriend dozens of other townsfolk there, and barter with them. For the right price, they'll buy almost anything you're willing to sell! And with the money you earn, maybe you'll be able to get a little something nice – say, a collectible for yourself, or maybe a unique gift for someone else – from one of the dozens of vendors.

The Night Market isn't just about buying and selling, though. There are other fun activities to partake in, such as themed parades, stage performances and cat racing – where it's not just the cats who run, because you ride them like horses! (Note: For the love of Nikko, *please* don't try this at home. It will not end well for anyone.)

As all of this goes on, you're also going to have to manage your daily activities, complete jobs and venture on quests of whimsy and wonder as you work toward your goal of restoring this village, your new home, to its former glory. Mt. Fugu (and its local cats) deserve the very best! **– DAVID**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER: HUMBLE GAMES
DEVELOPER: MEOWZA GAMES
RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 RATING: E



# Revisit Olimar's First Adventure!

## PIKMIN 1

**IN ORDER TO** promote Pikmin 4 – and in order to make the entire mainline Pikmin series playable on the same system – Nintendo made the decision to shadowdrop both Pikmin and Pikmin 2 onto the Switch eShop on the same day as the most recent Nintendo Direct broadcast: June 21. The first day of summer! And what a way to welcome in the new season!

Like Metroid Prime Remastered back in February, these two Pikmin games have been launched digitally first, and there's a physical version shipping to stores later on for those who'd prefer to tangibly own these titles. That release will be a Pikmin 1+2 combo bundle, giving you both games on one cartridge. The same deal is also available in the eShop, as you can buy together, or separately.

Unlike Metroid Prime Remastered back in February, these two Pikmin classics have not been graphically overhauled to an insane degree. There is visual improvement here, as everything is in widescreen and running in high definition, making these GameCube-era Pikmin titles look better than they ever have before. But you will quickly notice that the same polygonal models and surface textures are still in place, returning from 2001 in the case of Pikmin 1 here, and they look their age at this point. Pikmin 4's two more decades' worth of visual evolution are made all the more apparent given this context for contrast!

The numeral in the name is new: This is officially "Pikmin 1" now, with that digit slipped into the title. For marketing purposes, anyway. The actual in-game title screen still says "Pikmin" without the number 1. It would have been more trouble than it's worth to go in and alter that, I suppose.

And that's pretty much the vibe of this whole port: It hasn't really had much additional work done to it. No extra effort invested. It's simply Pikmin from the GameCube, brought over to the Switch with the most minor of adjustments, like making the button prompts in the UI correctly reference Switch controller buttons instead of GameCube ones.

Or should I say it's Pikmin from the Wii! This version appears to be based on "New Play Control! Pikmin" from 2009, and it's now running on Switch via the same in-house Wii emulator Nintendo used for past rereleases like Super Mario Galaxy. You don't exactly get the Wii feel here since there's no Wii Remote to use with the Switch, but Joy-Cons are a fair substitute and you can still get that extra degree of precision from motion-controlling your Pikmin-aiming cursor. It's a little hard to balance IR pointing with camera adjustments too, though, since both are happening on the Joy-Con (R).

I've left myself almost no space to discuss the game itself! But fear not, as we have another page dedicated to this point of origin for the Pikmin series further ahead in this issue. Flip forward for more details!

The evaluation here, then, simply concludes with the fact that Pikmin 1 is now playable on the Switch, and it has a natural HD facelift as a result of being on the newer hardware, but it doesn't offer anything extra or new beyond that. It's been pulled back out of the past and made available again, and that's it! And honestly, for a great game like this, that can be enough. **– LUCAS**

**8.5**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO RATING: E10+

# . . . and His Second Adventure, Too!

## PIKMIN 2

**AND NOW THE** second half of the two-in-one bundle!

I think it's likely that most past Pikmin players who choose to revisit these games on Switch will go ahead and invest in the Pikmin 1+2 combo purchase for $49.99, but since the games are both available as standalone eShop downloads for $29.99 apiece, it makes sense to evaluate them separately. Even if, on the technical sides of things, what you'll get with Pikmin 2 here is largely the same as what I just discussed for Pikmin 1!

Once again this is a port of a port. Or a slightly tweaked emulation of a port? It's journeyed from GameCube to Wii to Switch, and there's evidence of every one of those stops on the journey still in place here as it's reached its final destination.

A lot of the text, for some reason, is stretched out and looks squished. Pikmin 1 has this too: Text-heavy screens like the Piklopedia, which were originally designed to run in a 4:3 ratio, have been expanded out to 16:9 without any kind of font correction. This is another holdover from the Wii versions, and maybe it would have been too hard to correct with the process of emulation they're using here, but the result doesn't look great.

One big thing that Nintendo *did* change for this version of Pikmin 2 – because they surely had to, legally – is that all the old product placements have been removed from the game! Pikmin 2 is focused on finding lots of treasures, and you know what they say about one man's trash: several of the "treasures" Olimar comes across are things like discarded old bottlecaps. But whereas the older versions featured real-world logos like 7 Up and Dr. Pepper, this release has generic replacement textures.

All the Nintendo treasures are still intact, though! So you can still find things like R.O.B. the Robot's head and an old Game & Watch Ball unit. (Nintendo doesn't have to worry about losing the rights to display their own products – it's probably why we're getting more in Pikmin 4!) It's disappointing to not get to see all of the same old treasures . . . *but* it is interesting to rediscover them all and see how they were swapped out, like the 7 Up bottlecap becoming "Spicy Ginger Ale" now. Somebody at Nintendo was tasked to make all-new textures for this 2023 reissue of a 2004 game, and that's pretty wild.

The opening cutscene is gorgeous now – likely a result of some simple AI upscaling, but still. It looks snazzy.

And control-wise, like Pikmin 1, you get your choice between an all-buttons scheme, the Wii Remote-esque Joy-Con pointing or a hybrid between the two, where you can turn on motion control while using a Pro Controller or locked-together set of two Joy-Cons and get a bit of extra aiming precision.

I've also enjoyed how the high-res visuals of these versions allows me to play at the most zoomed-out level of the camera comfortably. I've never seen so far and wide in these games before! But with HD clarity, I can still make out all the details at that highest of angles, so why not?

Once again I've not discussed the game itself much at all – just the technical realities of its shift to the Switch! But we've got more Pikmin 2 information lying ahead in our full History of Pikmin feature, so carry on reading there. After you buy this!
**– LUCAS**

**9.0**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO RATING: E10+

# Explore a Paper World

## PAPETURA

**PERHAPS YOU'VE PLAYED** one of the Paper Mario games and snickered at how everything in the world was made of paper. It's a cute gimmick for those Mario RPGs. Papetura presents the other side of that paper coin: using actual paper to handcraft the world, instead of just mimicking it. Feardemic, the game's developer, sells it as "a handcrafted puzzle adventure game made entirely out of paper." It's very short; the whole game takes around two hours to experience. It's really more of an experience, or an art piece that happens to be interactive.

You begin as Pape, a little strip of paper who lives his life entirely inside a flower. One day an insect comes into the flower and gives him the chance to escape and explore the world beyond! Eventually, Pape finds Tura, a little magical black shred of paper who allows him to interact with the environment more.

The gameplay is essentially point-and-click, though you guide it more like a platformer. Pape is very slow and weak. He seems to only be able to do the absolute minimum to interact with his world.

Each screen, aside from being eye candy, is a puzzle, much like the games that influenced Papetura, like The Neverhood and Machinarium. You need trial and error to see where to go next and how to get there. There's no need to ever look up any answers on the Internet, though, as the game gives you many clues. And if the solution still isn't clear after that, a simple minigame akin to Pac-Man (if he were being chased by insects in a bubble) just gives you the answer. Not much of it is intuitive, so this function is welcome. A lot of these sorts of games leave the player in the lurch when the puzzles get abstract.

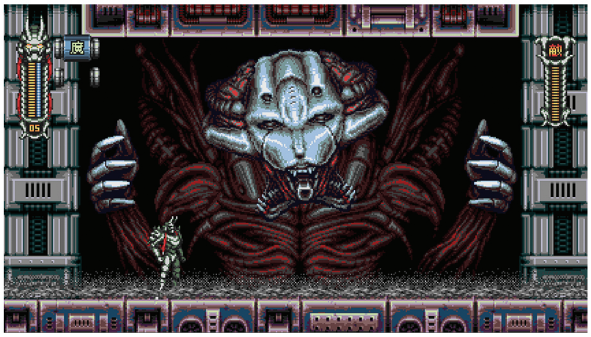
The antagonist in this paper world is fire. Nothing could ruin the whole thing quicker than fire, and one insect seems to want to watch the world burn! While Pape spends most of the game running from this bug's attacks and tactics, an eventual confrontation is inevitable.

The other characters in the game interact very little, but they are interesting. Many of them need something in order to give you a key item to solve a puzzle. Others you actually venture inside, and many are out to hurt you. The animation and creativity involved in each is stunning. While it's a game about paper, the use of light and shadow really makes the world thrive.

Criticizing this art piece based on the standard semantics of most video games doesn't do it justice. While there is a story and a goal, and you use a controller to make the character interact with the world, this isn't really a game to be judged alongside Mario and Zelda. If you like the art, you should get the game to experience just how far the artists take the medium. **— BRETT**

**8.0**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: FEARDEMIC
DEVELOPER: PETUMS RATING: E10+



# 16-Bit Robowarrior

## VENGEFUL GUARDIAN: MOONRIDER

**WHILE PLAYING THIS** nostalgia-based action platformer, I had to check that I hadn't accidentally jumped into the Switch's Genesis or SNES retro libraries! The 16-bit style, the story, the music and even the gameplay are straight out of that era. But while it may have ranked on lists for action platformers back in that generation, how does it fare today?

Immediately upon finishing the first level, many influences come to mind. Mega Man X is foremost, but also Contra, ActRaiser and many more. But while it recalls those experiences, it doesn't beat any one of them. It even suffers a bit from trying to be all of those games at once.

Upon completing the first level and learning of the razor-thin plot, you are able to choose your next level from six Robot Masters . . . er, sorry, "Guardians." While most are action platforming levels, some have on-rails motorcycle levels that combine Road Rash mechanics with Star Fox shooting. These are fun and a nice change, but there are large periods with nothing going on.

The larger-size sprites are reminiscent of Altered Beast or Alien Soldier. They're gorgeous, but unfortunately bring back the claustrophobic feeling of jumping around spikes that I never enjoyed in the '90s. The camera doesn't help either, reviving the ludicrous problem of having to do leaps of faith to find your next platform when you can't see your way forward.

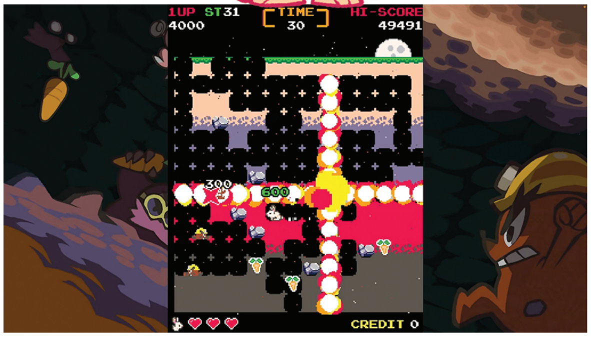
Chips you easily find in each level enhance some part of your hero bot. You can only pick two, and you'll likely find the two you'll keep throughout the quest in the first few levels. Some are just for fun, but others, like double jump, seem critical – so it's a disservice to make players choose. Arriving at a boss battle will start some dialogue and existential dread before the action. Once defeated, you'll – surprise, surprise – receive their weapon! These range from helpful to silly and each have weapon energy that needs to be replenished upon use. Both health and weapon energy refills are sparse, which limits experimentation but adds challenge.

After a few more levels and bosses, the game is done. Checkpoints definitely speed things up and are generous, even giving you a restore point halfway into the last boss. The game lasts around two to three hours, and there's little reason to replay. You could decide to find all 12 chips, but the game doesn't reward you for that. There is a chip that puts the game at one-hit kill for a challenge if you want to try to get your money's worth.

Not much about the game will stick with you, but if you played a lot of games in the '90s it will be a nice distraction – or at least a call to revisit the games it's trying to mimic. Moonrider would be mid-tier at best in the '90s, but will likely be lost to obscurity in the saturated retro market of today. **— BRETT**

**6.5**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: THE ARCADE CREW
DEVELOPER: JOYMASHER RATING: T




# Burrowing Bomberbunny!
## MURTOP

**NAMED AFTER THE** developer's pet rabbit Murti and the Bartop style of arcade cabinet, Murtop feels a little different than your average retro '80s arcade throwback. And some of those differences might make things tough for it!

Like Donut Dodo (the last big game from publisher Flynn's Arcade), Mutrop combines elements of two beloved gaming franchises, which in this case are Dig Dug and Bomberman. Those are two big pairs of shoes to fill all around! While Donut Dodo elegantly harnessed the principles of both Nintendo's Popeye and Donkey Kong Jr. – while making the art and music just a touch better than was possible in "real" arcade games from 40 years ago – Murtop's fusion elements and influence aren't as seamless.

The fact that the protagonist is a semi-realistic rabbit that can inexplicably drop giant bombs, while the handful of enemies are cartoon animals who sometimes wear human clothes, yet live in small, unfurnished holes, all feels a bit muddled. Likewise, taking Dig Dug's "create your own maze through digging" structure and "fusing" it with Bomberman's cross-firing explosions isn't a perfect fit. But after you get about eight levels in and the enemies start to ramp up, it becomes easier to pull off combos, and the formula begins to gel.

It also becomes harder to stay out of the way of your own detonations before they kill you. I would wager that about one-fifth of my overall deaths in Murtop came from accidental self-destructions.

But Murtop has 256 unique levels, so you'll have a lot of time to practice. They come in waves (one with basic enemies, one with enemies that throw rocks, a bonus stage, etc.) that cycle after every five stages, but each has a unique layout, ramping up in difficulty as you go. They're timed as well, which was another frequent cause of death during my time with Murtop. The latter half of the game becomes more of a race against the clock than Watership Down-style battles of bunnies and nature. It all comes to a head after Stage 256, which features a classic kill screen (a glitch that marked the end of many classic arcade games).

Also like a classic arcade game, you have infinite continues, but no save states, so players will need to commit and be persistent to see it all. That leads to a fair amount of replayability, but not as much as multiplayer would have. For a Bomberman-inspired game to be single-player-only feels like a misstep. Maybe they axed competitive play because the game is also TATE Mode and Flip Grip compatible, two features that don't lend themselves well to multiple players at once? Either way, I hope multiplayer is added in the future.

In the meantime, this bouncy, bombastic but slightly befuddled game gets an . . . **– JONATHAN**

**8.0**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: FLYNN'S ARCADE
DEVELOPER: HIULIT'S GAME STUDIO RATING: E

# Strider's Successor
## CANNON DANCER – OSMAN

**BACK IN THE** mid-'90s, rumors ran wild of an arcade game that sounded too weird and cool to exist. "It's like Strider, except the guy doesn't have a sword, and he'll fistfight a tiger. And the last boss is . . .slavery? I heard only one arcade has it, somewhere in Kalamazoo . . . ". And so on.

Now, for the very first time, this mythical title is on home consoles! Directed by Kouichi Yotsui, one of the driving forces behind Capcom's Strider, Cannon Dancer – Osman aimed to be its spiritual sequel, just as Mighty No. 9 and Bloodstained aped Mega Man and Castlevania. The results are unhinged; a prime example of what happens when artists cut loose without big publisher oversight. It's strange in ways that kept it from becoming a mainstream hit, but also made it legendary.

Strider and Osman both star men in pillowy pants who can slide, scale walls, hang from ceilings and destroy just about anything with melee combat. Climbing around the entire circumference of a room to avoid a screen full of attacks then mashing the action button on an enemy's weak point is their bread and butter, but if bread and butter were a rare treat. Strider got a couple of official sequels and other off-brand successors, like Run Saber and Moon Dancer, but considering how popular the character is almost 40 years later, the list of Strider-likes is strangely short.

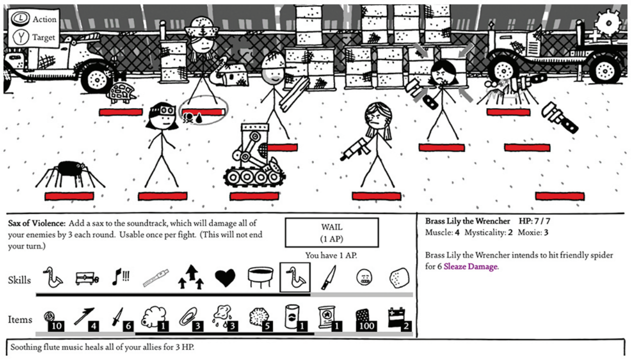
So Strider fans are sure to get a kick out of Osman, but they're also in for some surprises. A few of its bosses are giant, golden, half-naked people. At one point, Osman is essentially crucified. One cutscene shows our hero threaten a defenseless man in a fancy bathroom, only to see him explode in a spray of blood after touching a stationary, levitating sword. And those tigers Osman fistfights? They also explode upon death, as does just about everything in the less-censored Japanese version of the game (also included in this purchase). Osman's pixel art is some of the best of the era, but if you aren't a fan of the medium, a lot of the visuals here will probably just puzzle you.

More universally puzzling are some of the difficulty spikes later in the game. The last level does away with instant continues and instead institutes checkpoints that force players who die to replay some of its tougher parts. Osman only takes about 20 minutes to beat on a no death-run, but the repeat deaths may turn many off before they get there.

This port introduces new, helpful cheats like a double jump and temporary invincibility, but they don't do much to offset the unfairness or otherwise change the game. So while Cannon Dancer – Osman is a wild piece of gaming history, the casual and curious may want to wait for a sale before traveling back in time to '90s Kalamazoo. **– JONATHAN**

**7.5**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: ININ GAMES
DEVELOPER: MITCHELL CORP. RATING: T



# More Fun with Stick Figures

## SHADOWS OVER LOATHING

**STICK FIGURES HAVE** a rich history in both comedy and video games. So, naturally, a comedy video game about stick figures should be pretty good, right? Well, yeah!

Shadows Over Loathing is the third game in Asymmetric Games' "Loathing" series. It's equal parts turn-based RPG and adventure game, but it's delivered via a bizarre stick figure aesthetic that's as charming as it is hilarious.

All your basic RPG mechanics are right where you expect them to be: There are items and outfits that can augment your stats, you level up by collecting experience points and choosing different character classes changes how you go about battling enemies. Meanwhile, there are boundless obtuse environmental and logic puzzles to solve, and these best illustrate where Shadows Over Loathing truly shines: its writing.

This game is all about finding weird and surprising ways to make you laugh. For example, if you go to the settings menu and look around, you'll find two unusual options that you can toggle on or off. One is Arachnophobia: You won't encounter any spiders. And right underneath it is Arachnophilia: You will encounter *so many* spiders. There's also a line labeled WooOOooO: This option is haunted. What does it do? I won't spoil it here, but it sure made me laugh.

The story this time around is based on an occult murder mystery. Your character is tasked with solving a number of strange goings-on, many of which involve weird portals, grotesque monsters and, of course, corpses.

Puzzles and sidequests can be found absolutely everywhere, and many can be quite perplexing, but I've found that no matter how impossible a puzzle seems, it's always worth seeing through because it will invariably result in some sort of joke that I never saw coming. This game's wit can not be overstated.

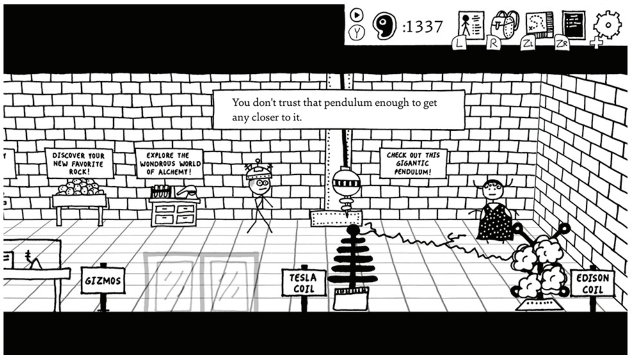
It's also worth pointing out that even though the visuals are all stick figure designs, Shadows Over Loathing is still a surprisingly good-looking game. Every character and environment is purposefully drawn, and riddled with humor. Its simplistic nature results in a very clean look that's pleasing to the eye, even in black and white.

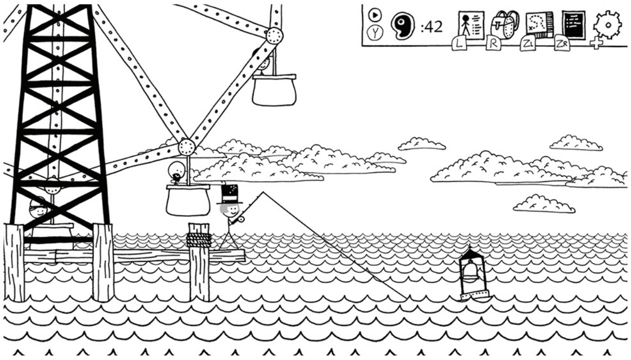
If there was one thing to complain about, it's that like its predecessor, the battles can be a bit dry. There's a lot going on, but I rarely found myself going through the effort to learn all of the mechanics. There's still plenty of humor to be had in these sequences, but they often felt like they dragged the experience down. Fortunately, most if not all encounters can be avoided thanks to the game's pacifist option. I wasn't able to figure my way out of every scenario, but at a certain point I wrapped my head around the game's logic and was able to successfully avoid most battles.

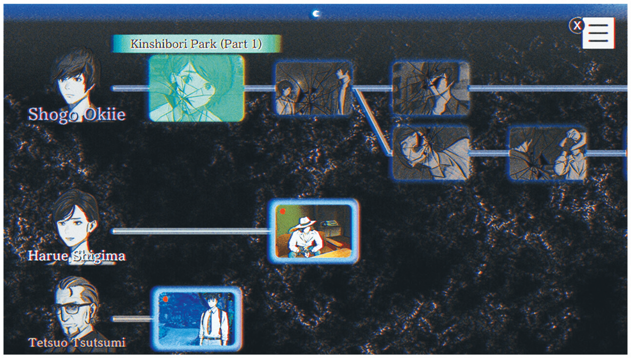
If you're looking for a game that will make you think and laugh at the same time, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better one than this! **— KRIS**

**8.0**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: ASYMMETRIC RATING: T






# A Clash of Cursed Souls

## PARANORMASIGHT: THE SEVEN MYSTERIES OF HONJO

**"WHEN THE LEGEND** becomes fact, print the legend."

Paranormasight presents an interactive narrative about the power behind the tradition of storytelling. Set against the actual city of Sumida, Japan, right at the cusp of the booming globalization of the '80s, four strangers – each from different walks of life – find themselves tethered by fate when they come into possession of cursed artifacts tied to urban legends passed on through the eras. The curses allow the bearer to kill instantly (when certain conditions are met), and to also resurrect a soul of the deceased once the body count is high enough. As the story unfolds, players leap across storylines to unravel the true nature of the curses, all while avoiding similar curse-bearers with more sinister intentions.

From start to finish, the plot of this visual novel/adventure game is consistently engrossing thanks to a rather strong localization. The text alone is more than up to the task of making your skin crawl, through paragraphs of grisly dialogue and descriptions. Paranormasight's macabre descriptions absolutely do not hold back any punches, deftly gliding through mature themes, intense scares and twists as swiftly bone-chilling as anything found in a Junji Ito comic. While the visuals themselves are rarely graphic, you should still consider yourself warned for intense descriptions of gore, violence and varying shades of abuse throughout the game.

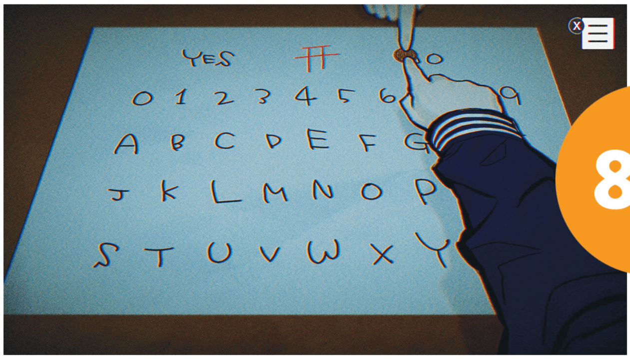
There's plenty of opportunity to interact with Paranormasight's world beyond just reading, however. Much of the game is spent pointing and clicking through some impressively rendered 360-degree environments, crafted in close collaboration with the tourism board of the real city of Sumida. Knowing there's a kernel of authenticity to the world only adds to the game's haunting impact. Once some of the more clever puzzles begin tasking players with thinking fourth-dimensionally, the horror takes an even more tangible shape. To describe these truly inventive moments in detail would spoil their impact, but know they are extremely effective in using the limited game mechanics to blur the line between the game and reality, fact and fiction.

That being said, the artifice of the game only begins to erode slightly when looking at how the game itself handles. Paranormasight certainly plays its best in Handheld Mode when operated in conjunction with the intuitive touchscreen controls. Also developed as a mobile game, these controls handle better compared to navigating a number of menus (and even more submenus) by using both sticks, the D-Pad and buttons on a traditional controller.

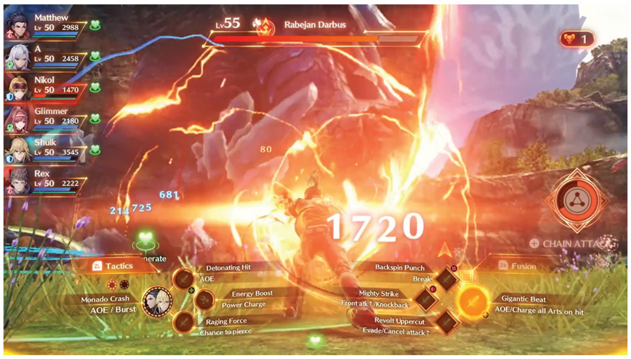
Fortunately, the game never requires twitch reactions, since most of your time is spent reading – both dialogue and an in-game encyclopedia that catalogues all the information you encounter along the way. Knowledge is your greatest asset in Sumida, with any hurdles to progress usually taking the form of information you might not have noticed the first time around. Getting stumped can certainly put a damper on the flow, but often the solution comes down to paying close attention to specific phrasing in text or remembering you can turn around when exploring an environment.

Over the course of about 10 hours, Paranormasight delivers what is undoubtedly one of the surprise gems of the year and represents a true triumph within the Japanese horror genre. Fans of both adventure games and visual novels should sink their teeth into this Western debut from a much-lauded visual novel dev team! **– JOHN-CHARLES**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: XEEN RATING: M




**8.0**




# Where All Stories Converge

## XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 3: FUTURE REDEEMED

**WHEN IT LAUNCHED** a year ago, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 provided an exceptional JRPG experience in every way, from its themes of life and what it means to different people to its vast world and engaging gameplay. We got to know and love the main cast of six, who learned their lives were so much more than constant war and strife.

It was a perfect formula! . . . So how do you follow up and improve on something like that in a DLC?

XC3's Future Redeemed expansion answers this question in three key ways: communicating its themes through different perspectives, enhancing gameplay systems and adding lots and lots of fanservice.

Future Redeemed serves as a prequel to XC3's main story, and it's safe to say there will be spoilers after this point.

In XC3, you encounter the City, which is made of people who aren't bound by Aionios' neverending war and limited 10-year lifespans. It's an anomaly in this world, and we come to learn that it's actually the second City that was established (after the first was destroyed), and it flourished under seven legendary figures known as the Founders.

Future Redeemed tells the story of the Founders and what lead to the formation of the second City. This was one of the biggest mysteries left unexplained in XC3, and I'm so glad that the Founders got their own separate story. My only wish is that we had more time with them!

Future Redeemed protagonist Matthew encapsulates the perfect combo of goofiness, tenacity and kindness. He's joined by the wise and equally deadpan A, and together, they make an amazing duo.

Then, we have the older versions of former XC protagonists Shulk and Rex. I have to hand it to the writers with how they handled these two. In Future Redeemed, Shulk and Rex have matured and grown from their struggles, but they also retain their fun quirks. Shulk still geeks out when he sees impressive engineering, and Rex continues to use his wonderfully cheesy phrases.

Rounding out the cast are Nikol and Glimmer, who were former soldiers from Keves and Agnus respectively, and have obvious connections to Shulk and Rex.

XC3's main cast shared the perspective of being former soldiers, but in Future Redeemed, the group brings a host of different experiences. This led to some really cool scenes, like when Shulk and Rex reveal some key truths about the world to Matthew, and when Matthew breaks up a fight between Nikol and Glimmer.

Future Redeemed's story is built upon these moments, with plenty of cool callbacks from past games woven in between. Without spoiling too much, the narrative, in true Xenoblade fashion, does leave some questions, but it ties everything from the entire trilogy together in a truly beautiful way.

Future Redeemed also features gameplay changes in order to fit within the story's lore and to provide some fresh experiences. Because it takes place in the past, the fully-fledged Ouroboros power found in XC3's base game doesn't exist yet.

To offset the loss of Ouroboros forms, characters gain Unity Skills and Unity Combos when they're paired together. The skills provide an

DLC PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: MONOLITH SOFT
RATING: T

assortment of buffs. The combos occur after an enemy has gone through the Break, Topple and Launch sequence. Then, you activate a pair's finishing move, and reminiscent of XC2, giant text splashes across the screen with the name of the attack.

Exploration and character progression are also enhanced.

XC3 did a great job with rewarding players for exploring the vast world of Aionios through multiple side activities, and Hero quests, where you could meet different characters and gain their classes and support in battle.

Future Redeemed takes this a step further: Every item you collect, every location you discover, every enemy you fight, every citizen you speak to, etc., ties into your characters' progression by rewarding you with Affinity Points.

At the game's start, your characters have barebones Arts and Skills. As you explore, you gain Affinity Points and use them to level up Arts, unlock Skills and increase stats in the characters' Affinity Growth menu. The game also introduces Collectopaedia and Enemypaedia menus for each area, to keep track of what you've collected and fought.

Exploration gained a new system in the form of Field Crafting. With it, you can repair ladders and construct ether slides and ether lifts to access new areas using materials gathered in the world.

The only criticism I had with the new systems is that additional Arts, Affinity Growth options and gem and accessory slots were locked until you found the appropriate unlock kits for them. For example, in order to equip the six party members with three gems each, you must find the 12 gem unlock kits in the world. Otherwise, each character can only equip one. While I didn't mind progression being mostly tied to exploration, gathering the 48 kits needed to unlock all characters' Arts, Affinity Growth, accessories and gems felt like a chore.

Future Redeemed provides an amazing balance of keeping what made XC3 so phenomenal and adding in just the right number of changes. Most of all, it serves as a beautiful love letter to fans who've been with the series for the long haul, as it features some callbacks to Xenogears and Xenosaga as well!

Series creator Tetsuya Takahashi said XC3 finishes this current arc of the series, but it's not the end. There's more to come! **— MAGGIE**

# Get Your Life in Order!

## A LITTLE TO THE LEFT

**BACK IN MY YOUTH,** I took great pride in my organization habits – everything from my desk at school to my bedroom at home was far more carefully arranged than those of my peers. But as time marched on, those habits became anchors that stoked anxiety and strained relationships. I became frustrated when my classmates didn't properly adhere to the instructions of a group project as I did, or when my structured weekend routine would be interrupted by impromptu errands with my parents.

It wasn't until this past year, through extensive self-reflection and regular therapy sessions, that I could finally put a name to this rigid behavior: obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

A Little to the Left is a puzzle game about recognizing patterns, not in abstract shapes, but in household furniture and knickknacks. It's a celebration of tidiness and perfection, in which a solution can be as obvious as straightening out tilted picture frames until they are parallel with the floor, or split across multiple possible outcomes such as whether to sort pasta shells by size or by how twisty they are. Once you discover the perfect arrangement, a bell gently chimes and you're whisked away to the next task.

While the earliest puzzles are rather cut-and-dry, later ones grant leeway to express your personal flair. There's little else to do with a scattered pile of seashells, for instance, except to place identical objects on opposite ends for that eye-pleasing symmetry – but exactly where should each item go? Should the nautilus shells be placed in the upper corners, or closer toward the bottom? Would the starfish look better in the center, or is that spot more suited for the opened clam shell? Well, no need to sweat too much, because whatever you decide is always a correct answer!

For players who otherwise don't mind a bit of clutter in their lives, A Little to the Left is a cozy time-waster that can sometimes cause frustration, especially during the more esoteric puzzles that require a keener eye for order. Players with more compulsive personalities such as myself, on the other hand, may have a completely different experience, one more akin to a relaxing meditation session.

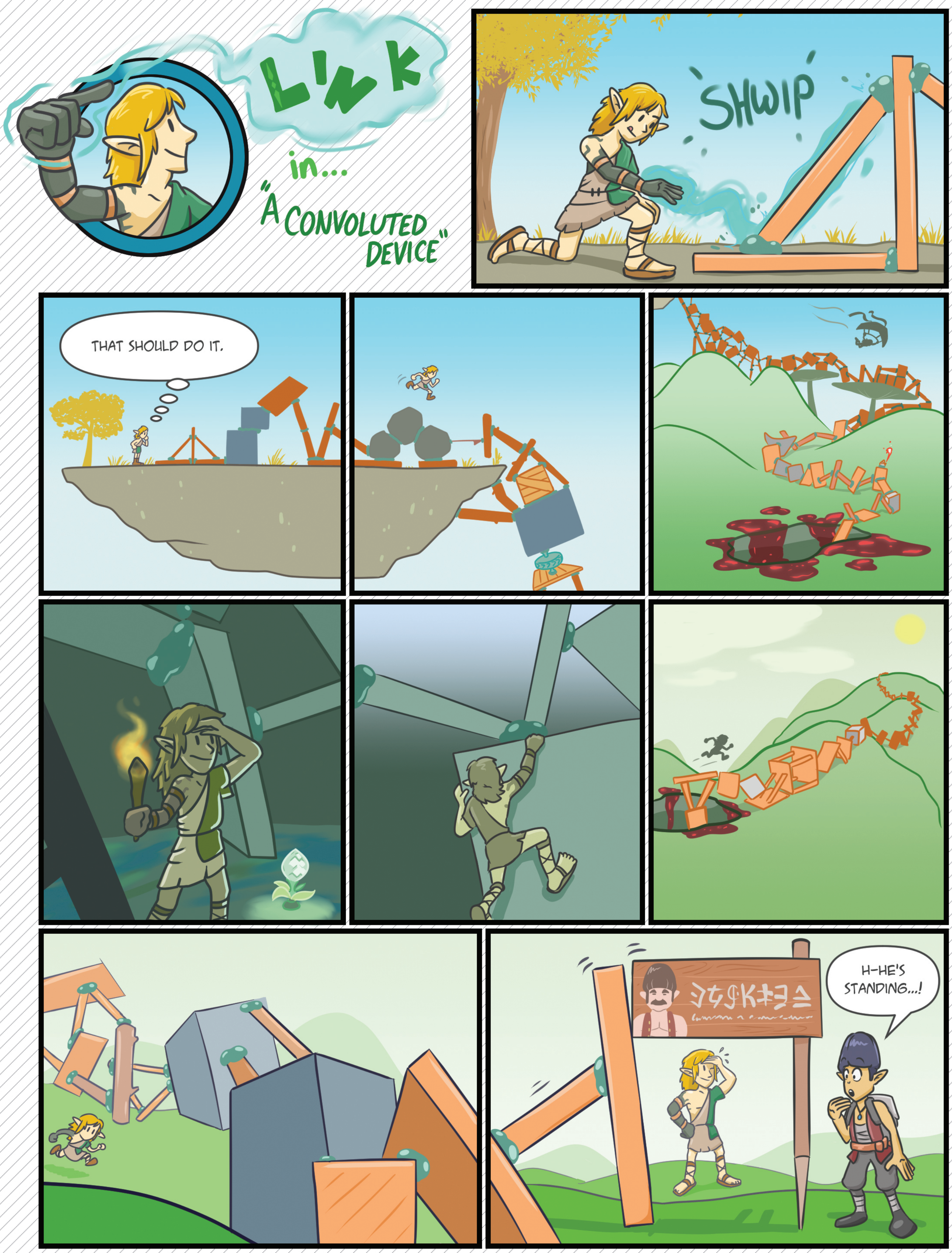
I first started playing the game on a recent international flight. Between the hard seats and the stifling cabin air, I was certain that I'd be too distracted to properly focus. A few puzzles in, however, I was completely immersed, tweaking my virtual space in such a way that I felt as though all my other problems and concerns were as far away as my plane was from the surface below. My perfectionist tendencies may inspire gentle ribbing from friends and coworkers these days, but in this moment, I can express myself and be congratulated for a job well done!

Every so often, a fluffy white cat will enter the frame to scatter your latest arrangement. If this happened in real life, I'd be unable to relax until everything was back in order. But here, the game recognizes that your task is complete and moves on to the next, barely paying mind to the cat's misbehavior. It's telling you that nothing lasts forever and you should find beauty in the temporary – like a Japanese monk erasing his meticulously curated gravel garden to start anew.

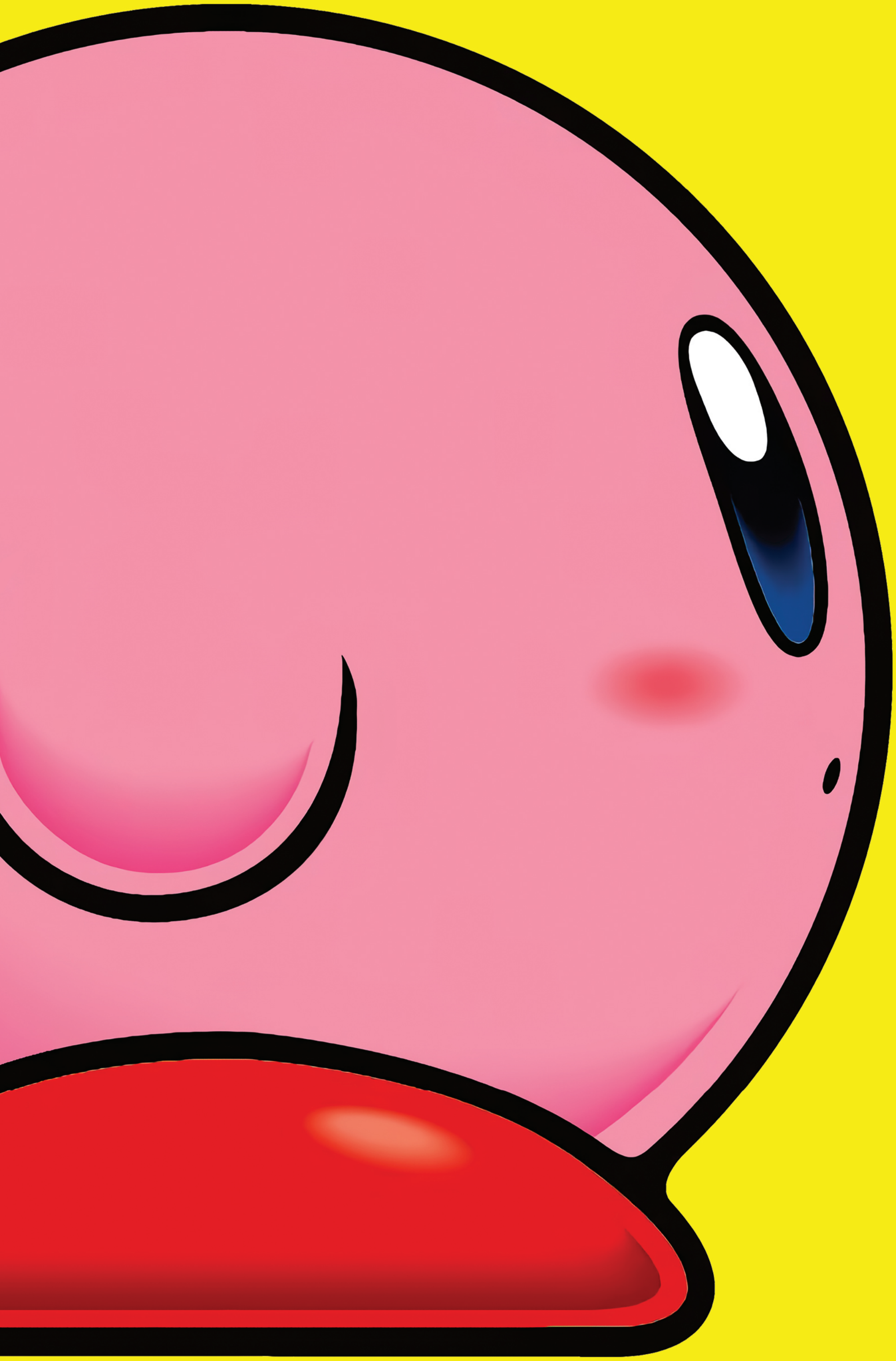
As of this writing, the recently announced "Cupboards & Drawers" DLC hasn't yet arrived. When it does, you can bet I'll be ready once again to lose myself to symmetry and order! **– TONY**

SWITCH
PUBLISHER: SECRET MODE
DEVELOPER: MAX INFERNO
RATING: E

**9.0**

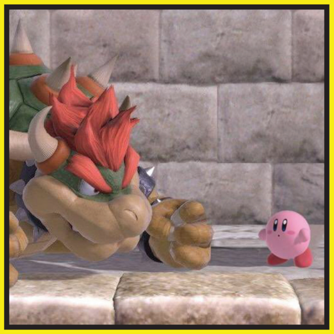



BY MATTHEW TARANTO



# ACTUAL SIZE

## HOW VIDEO GAME HEROES REALLY MEASURE UP!



## KIRBY
### *8 INCHES TALL*

**WHILE CROSSOVER GAMES** like Super Smash Bros. Ultimate do their best to standardize the sizes of the casts of characters they include (so we aren't left with insanely unbalanced match-ups like the custom-made example shown above), most video game heroes also have canon heights that their developers try to keep in mind when designing games within their own series.

Take everyone's favorite pink powerhouse, for instance! Kirby is canonically only eight inches tall. If you've got a physical copy of this magazine in your hands, we've got a precisely eight-inch-tall Kirby over on the left page for you to reference!

It does make a certain amount of sense for Kirby to be fairly small within the context of his own world – after all, his primary rival, King Dedede, is a penguin, and that feels about right size-wise. Though some larger-scale settings now seem to be smaller in hindsight . . . if Kirby's less than a foot high, then would all of Waddle Dee Town be able to fit in my backyard? Would the skyscraping Butter Building be no taller than a tree? (I need a calculator.) **– LUCAS**

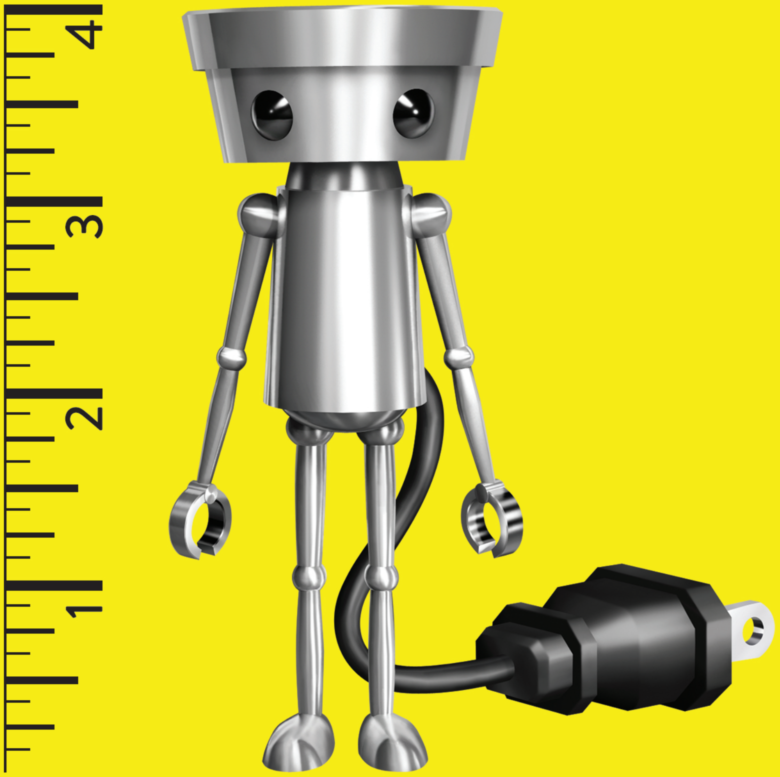
## MINISH LINK
### *2 INCHES TALL*

**THE MINISH ARE** are a minuscule race introduced in The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap, and Hylians also call them the Picori. A festival that marks 100 years since the last contact between the two races is celebrated at Hyrule Castle. During the tournament, the evil Vaati – who is revealed to have once been a Minish himself – destroys the Picori Blade and petrifies Princess Zelda. Link sets out to find the Minish to restore the blade, and that leads him to Ezlo, a Minish who was transformed into a cap by Vaati. He helps Link shrink using portals to meet the Minish.

The Minish are much shorter than a blade of grass in the games, and Link appears to be slightly larger than them in the game. Somewhere around two inches tall! **– BRETT**

## CHIBI-ROBO
### *4 INCHES TALL*

**NEXT TO PIKMIN,** Chibi-Robo is Nintendo's tiniest, toughest franchise. Despite never having a major hit, the series ended up lasting for a decade, featuring two sequels, an AR camera spin-off and a 2D platforming reboot, complete with its own built-to-scale amiibo! Being a part of the toys-to-life phenomenon was a perfect fit for the little guy, as his initial adventure was about a Toy Story-style world where inanimate playthings get moving when their owners aren't around. The humans are a dysfunctional family made up of a toy-obsessed, reality-avoidant Dad, a picture-perfect Mom (who's considering divorce) and their kid, who wants to be a frog. Chibi does what he can to fix their problems, but that's a tall task for a tiny household helper bot! **– JONATHAN**



# MINI MARIO

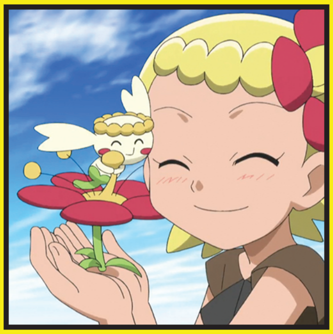
## *2 INCHES TALL*

**MINI MARIO'S DIMINUTIVE** size can vary at times. Mario's already fairly short to begin with: His official "life size" height is just under five feet, at 4'11", or 150cm. But in the mainline games that feature the Mini Mushroom power-up (or power-down?), touching one shrinks him until he's only about as tall as half a brick!

Mini Mario's smaller size allows him to perform some remarkable feats, such as running across the surface of water and making longer, proportionately higher jumps – but he's still just as vulnerable as in his normal "Small Mario" form. Worse, it takes extra effort to deal with Koopa creeps, as performing a ground pound is required to do even normal stomping damage! Otherwise, Mini Mario just bounces off foes harmlessly . . . though that in itself can come in handy sometimes.

Perhaps the biggest difference this littler Mario can make? In some games, defeating a boss in this form is the only way to access certain worlds! (It's an added challenge!)

More recently, Mini Mario hit the big screen in The Super Mario Bros. Movie, where his size was reduced even further, to a mere two inches! It did little to help in his fight against Donkey Kong, but on the bright side, at least getting hit only knocked him back to normal size! **– DAVID**



# FLABÉBÉ

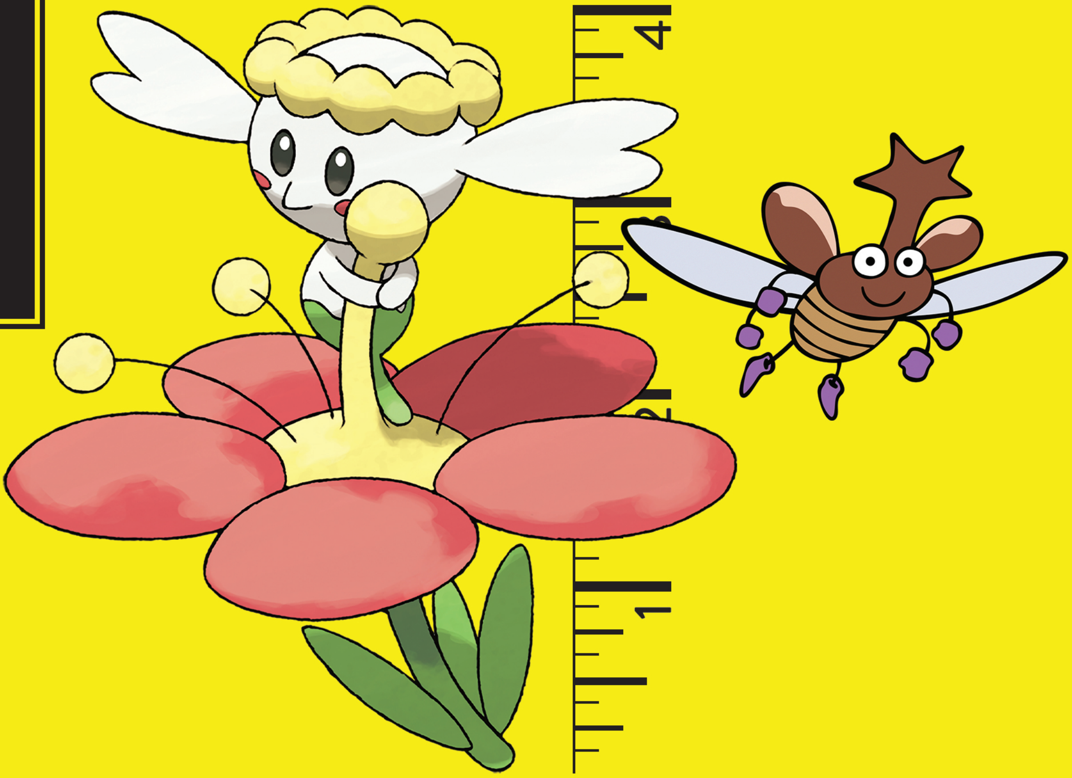
## *4 INCHES TALL*

**FIRST INTRODUCED IN** the Kalos region, Flabébé, the Fairy-type Single Bloom Pokémon, is one of the smallest and lightest Pokémon in the Pokédex. You've probably disturbed a couple of them snoozing while traveling through brightly colored flower patches during your treasure hunt in Paldea! Flabébé all look the same (except for the Shiny version) but what sets them apart are the five different colored flowers they can be found latching onto: red, orange, yellow, blue and white. According to the Pokédex, they form a lifelong symbiotic relationship with these colored flowers, which allow them to float in the breeze and perform various Fairy- and Grass-type attacks, which come in handy when reaching their final stage of evolution: Florges! **– REBECCA**

# BUZZ BUZZ

## *1.5 INCHES TALL*

**THE EARTHBOUND SERIES** is about regular kids discovering unbelievable supernatural beings, and related world-altering events, right under their noses. This theme was first introduced to Western fans with Buzz Buzz, a key character in the opening events of EarthBound. He's a little flying beetle from the future, joining our hero Ness, his ne'er-do-well neighbor Pokey Minch and his loyal dog to form their initial RPG party. Being a Super Strong Talking Insect NPC means he does the heavy lifting against Starman Junior, the game's first boss, giving the player time to learn the ropes. It's not long before he sends that Junior packing – making his untimely end from a malicious smack, delivered by the Minch family's boorish matriarch, all the more painful. **– JONATHAN**



BUZZ BUZZ ART BY JHONASC

## THE KNIGHT
### *.75 INCHES TALL*

**WHEN IT COMES** to tiny heroes, one of the smallest around is the nameless protagonist from Hollow Knight. Armed with nothing but an old nail, this little fella is approximately the size of a small ant. Fortunately for them, Hollow Knight takes place deep underground where the only enemies there are to contend with are fellow insects.

The Knight, as they're commonly referred to, isn't your average bug. They're full of a mysterious black substance called Void, and are actually a living discarded vessel, created by the Pale King and the White Lady. The lore is all a bit complicated, but the most important thing is this critter is one heck of an adventurer.

As is the case with most exploratory action game heroes, The Knight starts off relatively weak in comparison to their surroundings. But as the game goes on, they learn to use charms, spells and useful new abilities like wall jumping, double jumping and dashing. They also have the neat ability to leave behind a Shade of themselves wherever they get killed. If you then track down and defeat said Shade, you get all your dropped stuff back!

The Knight has made a number of cameo appearances in other indie games like Guacamelee! 2 and The Binding of Isaac, and can even be spotted in the intro for the animated series The Owl House, but Hollow Knight is the only game they've ever been properly featured in. Their sister Hornet, though, is the main protagonist in the upcoming sequel Hollow Knight: Silksong, a game that's surely releasing any time now . . . right? RIGHT? **— KRIS**

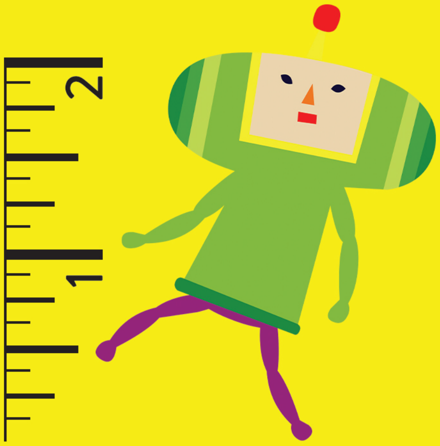
## THE PRINCE
### *2 INCHES TALL*

**THIS SWEET PRINCE** is among the freshest faces of the PlayStation 2's graduating class. He started off small, just two inches tall, so that he'd have room to grow!

Marveling at the incredible scale of his adventures — which can take him from rolling up tiny thumbtacks to towering skyscrapers in minutes flat — gamers have been getting to know this little guy since his first appearance in Katamari Damacy all the way back in 2004. Now, after years of shying away from major appearances on Nintendo consoles, his size in the eyes of Switch owners has blown up in similar ways.

With Katamari Damacy REROLL (reviewed in NF Issue #38) and We Love Katamari REROLL + Royal Reverie (reviewed in this very issue on Page 74) both available on all big consoles, the Prince has finally found an audience large enough to match his massive ambition and boundless capacity for growth.

If you've never played a Katamari game, you're missing out on the best size-contrasting series in the video game industry! The true teeny-tinyness of The Prince shines through in every scene, especially when his massive father The King of All Cosmos looms over him, filling up the sky! **— JONATHAN**



## PIKMIN
### *.5 INCHES TALL*

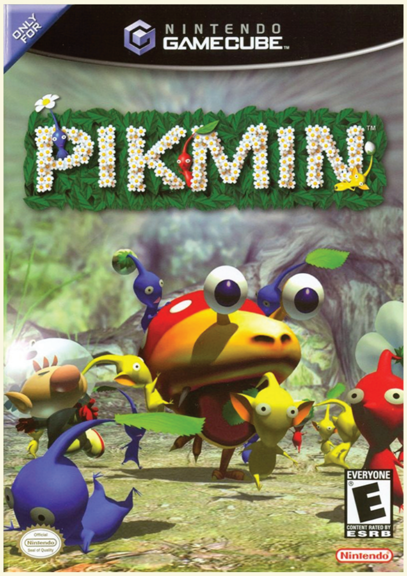
**LASTLY, LET'S CONSIDER** the scale of those powerful pipsqueak plant protagonists, the Pikmin. As with the rest of the small fry in this feature, we've printed some pictures of them at actual size just below. So just take a look, and let your eyes fully inform your brain! The Pikmin are miniscule indeed.

The Super Smash Bros. series had to shrink some characters like Ridley down in order to put them on equal footing with the rest of the fighters, and it's a good thing that they scaled the Pikmin and their Captains way up at the same time — otherwise these guys would've just gotten squashed flat under the other fighters' feet! (They might not have even seen them running around down on the ground!)

In their own games, their size has been fairly consistently tiny — with a bit of variance here and there. Some promotional art for the 3DS game Hey! Pikmin, for instance, showed Captain Olimar standing next to a common cherry, which was about half as tall as him. That would put him at about two inches tall, on the same level as Minish Link.

Outside of that one example, though, the Pikmin characters are shorter still, rising up to only about half an inch in height (not counting their stems!), and the Captains are all around .75 inches, standing only a quarter-inch taller than their army of capable companions. It's often been hard to appreciate how truly little these little guys are, but the new Pikmin 4 is going to help with that! See more in our preview a few pages ahead! **— LUCAS**

# The History of PIKMIN™




# Pikmin

## GameCube / December 3, 2001

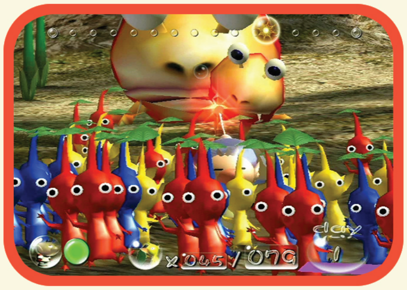
**IT ALL BEGAN** with a Mario demo. To show off the power of the new GameCube hardware, Nintendo produced a tech demo called "Super Mario 128" and exhibited it at their Spaceworld show in 2000. In it, 128 individual Marios ran around independently of one another – a massive amount of simultaneous characters the likes of which had never been seen before! But Mario would not be the one to ultimately use that technology in a final game.

The original Pikmin picked up and ran with it instead! Nintendo's first real-time strategy game, Pikmin cast players as a shipwrecked star pilot who suddenly found himself thrust into the role of commanding an army of up to 100 alien soldiers at once: the Pikmin! Half ants and half plants, Pikmin are a curious species of creatures who live by the philosophy of "strength in numbers." Individually they're weak, but when they combine their might by working together in teams, they can do everything from fighting off fearsome predators to lifting and carrying heavy objects.

It's that carrying capacity that Captain Olimar calls upon urgently. His spaceship, the S.S. Dolphin, dropped 30 critical components when he crash-landed on the Pikmin's strange, Earth-like homeworld. His life support system will only sustain him for 30 days, so he's got less than a month to direct these swarms of new pals to find those missing pieces and bring them back to home base, then reassemble his rocket and blast off again for home!

The reality of that countdown made the first Pikmin game tense, but players who kept their cool and mastered each of the three Pikmin colors' unique abilities could overcome every obstacle and earn the best ending: Reds were fire-resistant and also the fiercest fighters, Blues could safely navigate water areas and Yellows could be tossed the highest, as well as carry and place Bomb Rocks to blow up roadblocks.

As one of the earliest releases for the GameCube, Pikmin did demonstrate its unique power. And audiences responded, giving it strong sales! **— LUCAS**



# Pikmin 2

## GameCube / August 30, 2004

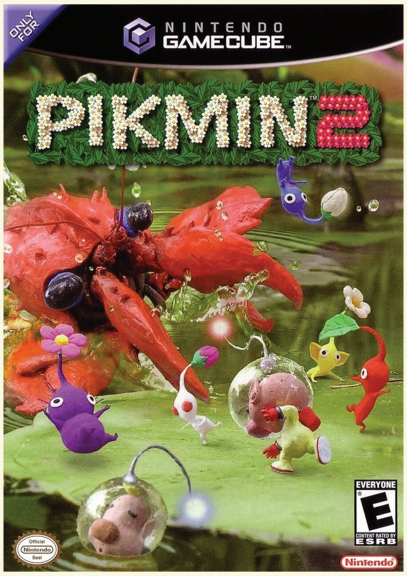
**THOUGH IT'S BEEN** over two decades since this series got its start and the greater Nintendo fandom has now fully embraced the franchise, when Pikmin first kicked off it was considered to be a pretty bold experiment from its creator, Shigeru Miyamoto. He'd made Donkey Kong and Mario and Zelda . . . but he hadn't done a totally brand-new IP like this in years! But Pikmin proved to be a hit, and in response to it moving over a million copies, Mr. Miyamoto and his same creative team quickly got moving on making a sequel.

Pikmin 2 took the core gameplay of the original, cut out some things fans didn't like so much, then added lots of new ideas. The main element that got the axe was the 30-day time limit casting a shadow of dread over the main campaign – now players could explore at their own pace, making as much or as little progress in a day as they liked. (Though individual days were still on the clock. You had to get your Pikmin safely back to base before the sun went down, or they'd get eaten at night!)

Olimar was joined by a new partner, the hapless Louie, giving players two Captains who could split up the Pikmin forces and cover more ground with separate teams. Their goal, instead of seeking lost ship parts, was treasure hunting! This odd Pikmin planet was seemingly confirmed to be Earth, as the two Hocotatian heroes could find and collect such valuable items as Duracell batteries and jars of Skippy peanut butter. (Real product placements!)

Two new Pikmin colors debuted as well. Burly Purple Pikmin could ground-pound enemies with their bulky bodies, and lift 10 times as much as lesser 'min. White Pikmin were poisonous, so any enemy foolish enough to eat one would get damaged – or be defeated on the spot! They also had a sense for uncovering buried treasure.

Pikmin 2 also ramped up the intensity in its underground cave exploration scenes. While delving into ever-deeper dungeons, players had to carefully make progress, without being able to replenish their ranks back at the home base! **— LUCAS**



# New Play Control! Re-Releases

### Wii / March 9, 2009 / June 10, 2012

**IS IT WEIRD** to be talking about the Wii versions here, after already kind of talking about them back in the Download section? Probably! But this History of Pikmin feature must be a complete chronicle of what's happened with this silly series, and it's important to note that after the successful one-two punch of the series' first installment and direct sequel on the GameCube (a not-so-popular system), every diehard fan of the brand expected to see a third game pop up on the Wii (a much more popular system). But it didn't! We didn't get any Pikmin 3 on Wii.

Instead, we got rereleases of the first two. Perhaps because the Wii got so popular so quickly, Nintendo looked back to the previous generation to find some games they could quickly port over to fill in the release calendar a bit. (Just like we've seen a whole lot of Wii U ports hit the Switch in the last six years!) What they landed on was the "New Play Control!" series, a set of seven GameCube titles brought back for encore appearances with the new selling point of having had their control schemes changed to use the new motion-sensing power of the Wii Remote.

Pikmin and Pikmin 2 were two of the seven, and obvious candidates for the upgrade: Being able to point at the screen to aim and toss Pikmin was much more precise, and faster, than having to use an analog stick to guide a targeting cursor into position. The new play control worked so well that it really did seem like a pilot test for Pikmin 3 to also launch on Wii later on – but it never did! It slipped to Wii U instead.

In fact, we almost didn't get Pikmin 2 on Wii! While the New Play Control! branding was used seven times over in Japan, in North America only Pikmin 1 got that label, in 2009. Pikmin 2 didn't follow it until over three years later, and while it was the same New Play Control! version Japan had enjoyed for years by that point, NOA instead sold it as a Nintendo Selects title instead. Oh well! We got them both on Wii in the end, and these have been the versions we've played for the last decade – both on Wii disc and later via the Wii U eShop. **– LUCAS**

# Pikmin Adventure in Nintendo Land

### Wii U / November 18, 2012

**DURING ITS FIRST** major hiatus between numbered installments, the Pikmin franchise made a grand return to televisions as an element of Nintendo Land, the Wii U-exclusive minigame pack-in title. Unlike the real-time strategy play of Pikmin 1 and 2, Pikmin Adventure is a linear action game for one to five players. In single-player, you control a Mii dressed as Olimar using the Wii U GamePad. If more want to join in, they can use Wii Remotes to be Miis dressed as Pikmin (Red, Blue, Yellow or White). Olimar players can throw both little Pikmin and your player-controlled Pikmin-cosplaying companions at enemies or obstacles by tapping the GamePad's screen. Pikmin-costumed players won't be commanding anyone but themselves, but they do have the power to mash enemies with their head sprouts. Head sprouts can be powered up with whip, hammer and knuckle attachments, all unique to this iteration of the franchise.

For the most part, the game sticks to the particulars of the Pikmin mythos. But like most aspects of Nintendo Land, most of the concepts from the source material have been streamlined. To make things fair, no matter who you play as, everyone can pick up bombs, or beef up by drinking nectar (up to Level 50 this time!). Your whole squad will need all these tools and more to get through the approximately two-hour campaign, featuring more enemies and boss fights than any other Nintendo Land attraction. While many of these enemies are toy-ified interpretations of Bulborbs, the primary enemy of the Pikmin, a handful of them are all-new faces. The intimidatingly long Monochromatic Pinchipede, Bob-omb-esque Creepy Beebs and occasionally invincible Telescoping Pumphogs (also known as Huffy Pumpers) are just a few of the foes you'll only find here in Nintendo Land.

There's also a Vs. mode that pits Pikmin and Olimar players against each other in timed treasure hunts – they're great, bite-sized romps into the Pikmin world. And that's Pikmin Adventure in a nutshell! It's a unique little remix of the Pikmin formula, sadly still landlocked on the Wii U. **– JONATHAN**

# Pikmin 3

## Wii U / August 4, 2013

**TOUCHING DOWN NINE** years after its direct predecessor, Pikmin 3 was both a return to form and an exploration of untapped potential. From its inception, the Pikmin series was Shigeru Miyamoto's way of embracing realistic graphics without compromising his dedication to abstraction and whimsy. While the characters are simple and silly-looking, Pikmin's environments are based on real-life backyards and flower beds. Being the first HD game in the franchise allowed Pikmin 3 to finally bring us near-photorealistic recreations of these backdrops. The results, in a word, were stunning.

The game also made good on the core gameplay principles of Pikmin 1. The roguelike survival dungeons of Pikmin 2 were ditched – instead, the focus went back to overworld exploration and wider themes of teamwork. To help keep things fresh, Olimar and Louie were initially out of sight, replaced by three Captains from a whole new planet: Koppai! Alph, Brittany and Charlie are each ejected from their ship, the S.S. Drake, in the game's opening moments, leaving each of them stranded in this strange new world.

Reuniting the three crewmates – with the help of Pikmin along the way – makes up the bulk of the narrative. The classic Reds, Blues and Yellows from Pikmin 1 are back, sitting alongside the new grey Rock and pink Flying types. Strategically switching between multiple Captains and Pikmin types was a lot to keep track of, but the Wii U GamePad offered a handy map that worked wonders at coordinating the chaos. Taking a cue from Nintendo Land's Pikmin Adventure, Captains could now also throw each other, adding to the strategic depth.

Initially, the lack of Olimar, Louie and Purple and White Pikmin was a disappointment, but they all eventually returned via DLC and bonus modes. If Pikmin 3 had bombed, this likely would have been the final evolution of both the Pikmin species and their series, but since it sold great, the sequels, rereleases and spin-offs only grew from here! **– JONATHAN**

# Pikmin Short Movies

## Wii U & 3DS / November 5, 2014

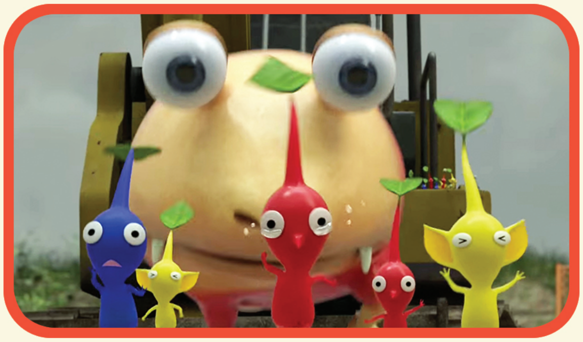
**SO THE PIKMIN** series, from a certain point of view, only exists because Mario stepped aside and allowed it to. Had Mr. Miyamoto and his team decided to take the Super Mario 128 tech demo and move forward with making it into a full Mario game, the swarm of 100+ plumbers becoming a final product likely wouldn't have left any room for the Pikmin to also make their debut in Nintendo's new "crowd control" genre.

Now, the Pikmin games do honor their heritage through the names of the first two Captains: "Olimar" is "Mario" with the letters rearranged (plus an extra L), and "Louie" is likewise an homage to Luigi. But still, the Pikmin owe Mario a greater debt than that, wouldn't you say? And, with some fresh hindsight granted to us by the box office numbers here in 2023, we can pinpoint the Pikmin's point of payback as having taken place in 2014.

That November, Shigeru Miyamoto got to get his feet wet in the world of filmmaking for the first time with the creation of the Pikmin Short Movies. These three shorts – originally sent into the Wii U and 3DS eShops as rare non-game content published there by Nintendo – were not made to promote any other Pikmin product. Pikmin 3 had already been out for over a year! So they simply were made to extend the reach of the Pikmin property as a whole . . . and also allow Nintendo as a whole to dip their toes into the waters of moviemaking too.

It was, we know now, a critical first step on the pathway that ultimately brought Nintendo and Mr. Miyamoto to the point where they could begin work on The Super Mario Bros. Movie! And since that film has been so stupendously successful, I think it's worth saying thanks to the Pikmin for blazing the trail!

The three shorts – called The Night Juicer, Treasure in a Bottle and Occupational Hazards – are all now watchable on YouTube, and you can see all three in about 20 minutes. Each one is worth your time! And we may get more in the future – Nintendo recently purchased the studio that made them and rebranded them as Nintendo Pictures! **– LUCAS**



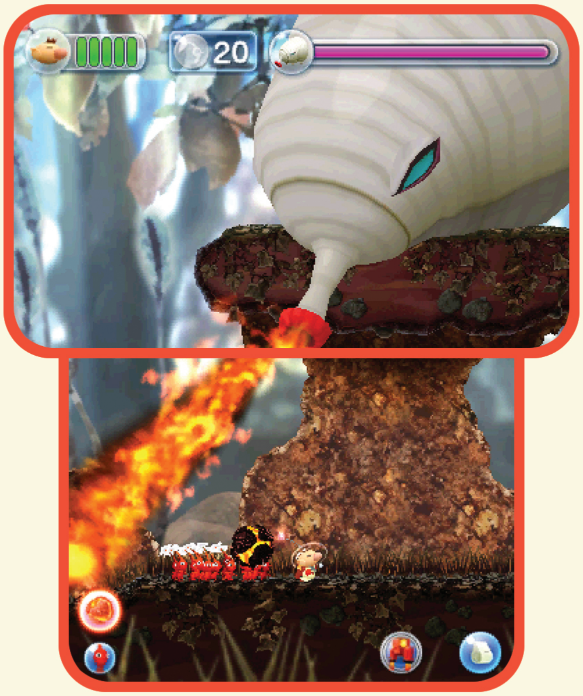
# Hey! Pikmin

## 3DS / July 28, 2017

**I THINK ONE** mark of a successful video game series is when that series branches out beyond its main line of sequels and earns its first spin-off. (Still waiting for Splatoon to get to that point!) Pikmin achieved that accomplishment six years ago, when the standalone handheld side story Hey! Pikmin crash-landed on the 3DS.

I categorize it as a crash only because of the overwhelmingly negative fan perception that has surrounded this game since it was first spun off. I think it was just poor timing! Mr. Miyamoto casually mentioned the existence of Pikmin 4 way before he should have – all the way back in 2015, as kind of an off-the-cuff remark during an interview with Eurogamer. So Pikmin fans were dialed in and waiting for the official, full announcement at every event and during each Direct video following that moment. For years! So when Hey! Pikmin was revealed as a 3DS game and not the full console-bound sequel everyone was expecting, it made a bad first impression.

The game is not that bad, though! It's a creative 2D side-scrolling interpretation of the series controlled by touch-screen inputs – you tap where you want a Pikmin to be flung, and it goes flying there! It also wisely used the 3DS' stacked-on-top-of-each-other dual displays for extra vertical real estate, making for effective moments like the Blowhog battle seen below. If you've never tried it, give it a chance! **– LUCAS**



# Pikmin 3 Deluxe

Switch / October 30, 2020

**DEVELOPERS NEED EXPERIENCE.**
We're seeing it happen more and more often: When a new hardware platform is released, several development teams' first efforts to ship for it will be older games: ports, remakes, remasters and the like. Rather than try to produce a brand-new title from scratch while simultaneously learning how to handle the new hardware, devs will eliminate one of those variables and focus just on learning the new machine's ins and outs, by taking one of their existing games and porting it over.

Fans end up getting a second chance to play great games of the past; developers earn knowledge throughout the porting process that they'll need to make the next great game from scratch. It's a win-win!

Pikmin 3 Deluxe is an outstanding example of this most practical of practices. If we're to believe Mr. Miyamoto's words and timeline, then Pikmin 4 had already reached a point of near-completion five full years before Pikmin 3 Deluxe made it out the door! But Nintendo didn't deploy 4 first. They saw what a hit they had on their hands with the Switch, and made what I think was the correct call to give the wonderful Wii U adventure of Pikmin 3 a second chance before moving further forward with the franchise.

Doing this Deluxe release surely benefited 4 too, as it's been able to profit from years' worth of extra polish due to Deluxe quenching Pikmin fans' thirst for a while – and the experience the team gained with Switch development while working on Deluxe surely led to 4 being able to be designed and programmed more efficiently.

Even better, 3 already being in place in the Switch library while plans were being made for 4's debut surely encouraged Nintendo to pursue ports of 1 and 2 as well. And now that they've launched, we've got the whole mainline Pikmin saga playable on one system! Pikmin fans are feasting even more than the Armored Mawdad pictured below!

For more thoughts on Pikmin 3 Deluxe itself (and not just the development circumstances surrounding it), flip ahead to Page 77 for an Archive page overview of my review! **– LUCAS**

# Pikmin Bloom

Mobile / October 28, 2021

**I MISSED THE** boat with Pikmin Bloom.

I'm not sure why I've never tried it in all the time since it launched nearly two years ago. I do know why I didn't try it right away: Because it's a game all about getting outside and walking, and it launched right at the time of year when the weather starts turning colder and taking walks outside shifts from being pleasant and peaceful to dreary and miserable. The name of the game is Bloom! It evokes the season of spring! So why did the push it live halfway through autumn?

Made by the same team responsible for the massively successful global phenomenon Pokémon GO, Pikmin Bloom is a similar real-world-reliant mobile phone experience. It takes a piece of Pokémon GO's gameplay – physically walking around for long distances to hatch Pokémon eggs – and changes it just slightly, so you're now walking to get new Pikmin sprouts to grow. At the same point when you would've seen a new Pokémon come out of its eggshell, in this game a new Pikmin will pop out of its planter and be ready to be plucked.

One by one you add new Pikmin to your party in this way, and they'll each then visually join your on-screen avatar when you embark on further expeditions on foot. Some additional gameplay mechanics include inspiring flowers to grow along your regular walking paths and sending your Pikmin out on errands to retrieve items like fruits and bring them back to you. Apparently they'll walk all the way back to you, no matter how far away you are! So if you send them on an errand while you're in California, but then you board a flight to New York before they get back, they'll just set off walking across the entire width of America to chase you down! Loyal little fellas, aren't they?

Pikmin Bloom hasn't added any content inspired by the new Pikmin 4 yet, but it surely will in the future. Maybe that could be the point when I finally jump in and start walking with my own virtual Pikmin crew? (Though I should go ahead and get started before we get into autumn again.) **– LUCAS**

# Pikmin in Super Smash Bros.

## First Seen on Wii / March 9, 2008

**THE FIRST PIKMIN** game went on sale in the States on the very same day as Super Smash Bros. Melee. (What a double dose of excellence for GameCube early adopters!) Because of that precise proximity, though, there was minimal Pikmin content within Melee – just a couple of trophies. So I'm going to count the next Smash sequel, Super Smash Bros. Brawl, as being the game that truly brought Pikmin into the franchise crossover fold!

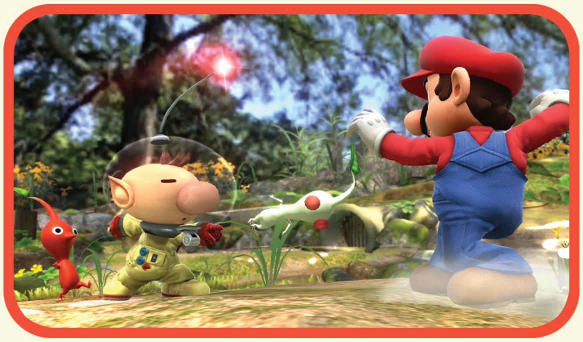
Captain Olimar was added to the roster as a new playable fighter. (Though sometimes Nintendo promotes that fighter slot as "Pikmin & Olimar," giving the Pikmin top billing.) He doesn't pack much of a punch himself. Instead, he plucks Pikmin up out of the ground and uses them as projectiles to form the foundation of his fighting style!

Red, Yellow, Blue, White and Purple Pikmin can all be used in this way, and all inflict different amounts of damage and added effects – Purples hit hardest, Yellows zap opponents with a bit of electricity, etc. Those five were the only types in Brawl, as Pikmin 3 was still years away at that point. But after it debuted and introduced Winged Pikmin to the franchise, they were added to Olimar's moveset in the following Smash sequels on Wii U and 3DS. They cutely pick him up and carry him to safety as his Up Special! (Before they came along, his Up Special sent a rope made of Pikmin sailing toward the nearest platform edge, trying to grab it like a tether!)

Two different stages in the Super Smash Bros. series take their settings from Pikmin games: Distant Planet and Garden of Hope. The former is a rain-prone forest level that shrinks all the combatants down to less than an inch tall; the latter has moving platforms, a breakable pot and an intimidating stage hazard in the form of the giant enemy crab of the Pikmin series, the Peckish Aristocrab.

Alph from Pikmin 3 also joined the playable cast in the 3DS and Wii U versions, but only as a costume swap of Olimar.

How might Pikmin be represented in Smash in the future? I'd say Oatchi is a perfect Assist Trophy candidate! **– LUCAS**



# Pikmin Cameos in Other Places

## They Can Pop up at Any Time!

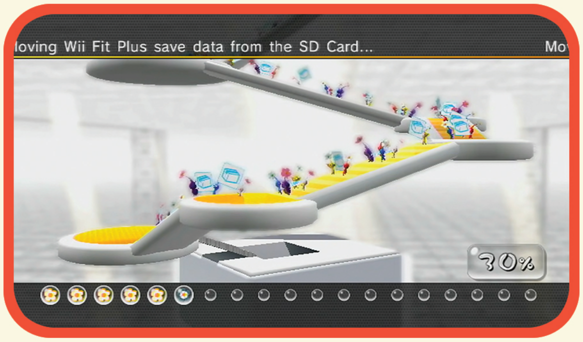
**WE'RE WRAPPING THINGS** up for The History of Pikmin now, as we've walked through nearly the entire chronology of the series in these past few pages. (Just tack the new releases of Pikmin 1 and 2 for the Switch onto the end of the timeline, along with Pikmin 4 soon enough!)

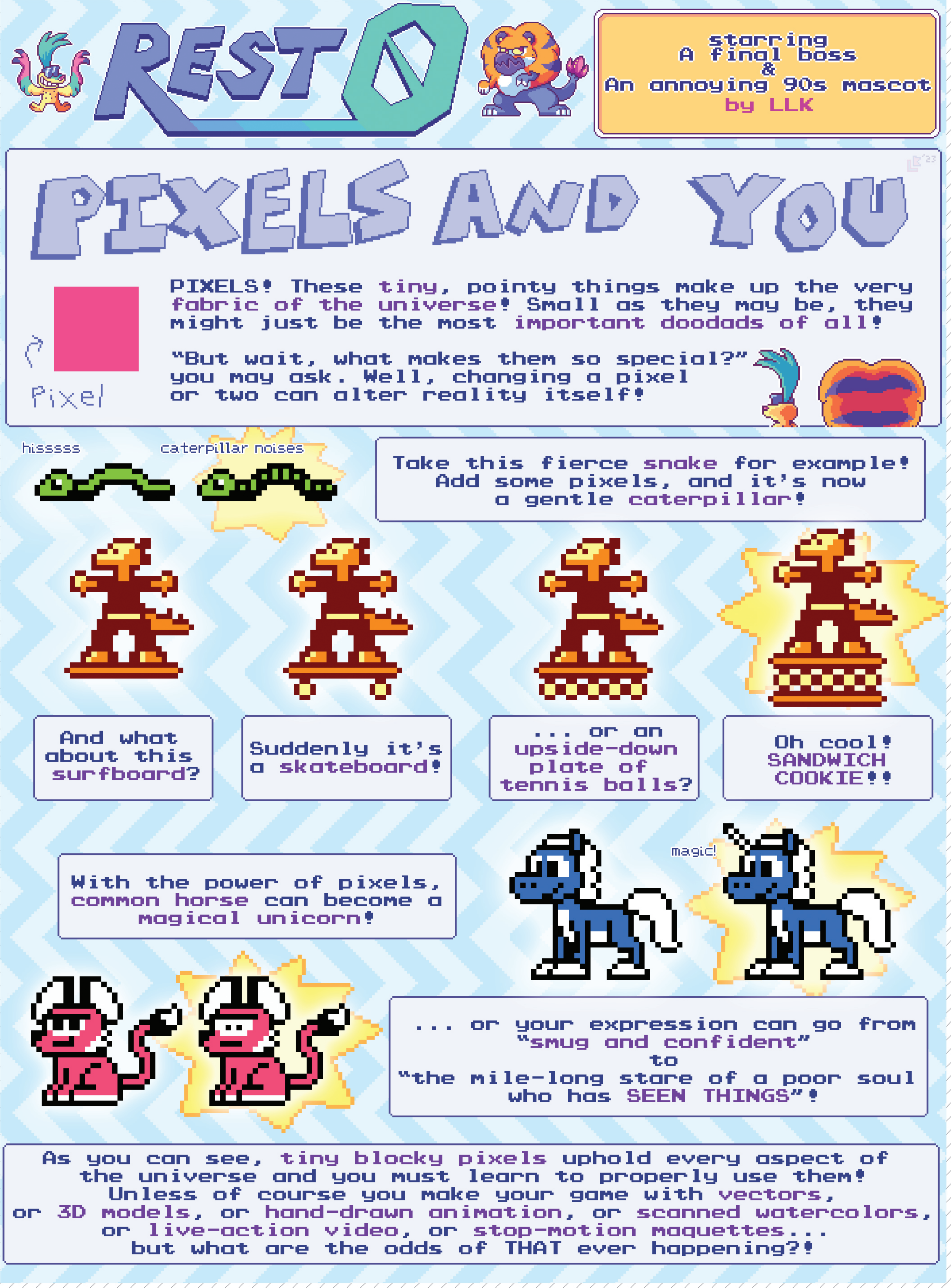
And yet, we're not done yet! We still need to shine at least a bit of a spotlight on the other appearances the Pikmin have had over the years – oftentimes not in video games at all!

The tiny size of the Pikmin makes them perfectly suited for subtle cameos all over the place. Did you see the Pikmin in The Super Mario Bros. Movie? The apartment that Mario and Luigi visit for a plumbing job early in the film has a Pikmin-shaped piece of home decor in the living room!

Did you ever transfer save data from a Wii to a Wii U? If so, you saw another Pikmin cameo: A whole army of the little guys would pick up and move the data from one system to the other. A nifty visualizer for an otherwise tedious process!

Most recently, Pikmin have begun to pop up in the Super Nintendo World theme park! You've got to be pretty eagle-eyed to spot them, but they're there, adding just an extra bit of fun to one of the most entertaining destinations on the planet for diehard Nintendo fans! **– LUCAS**






BY LINDSEY LAYNE KING

# PIKMIN 4

## Explore where no 'min has gone before!

**PIKMIN IS TURNING** into Toy Story.

Since this series got its start, it's starred toy-sized soldiers. Smaller, even! The green army men in Andy's room, tiny as they are, would likely stand twice as tall as a Pikmin. But that sense of scale has never been fully conveyed in the games.

Sure, Pikmin 2 had our heroes gathering everyday household objects that were much larger than they were. Pikmin 3 even had a mission where you could run around on top of a giant pizza! But that was the vibe: the feeling that the other objects around the characters were large, not that we, the characters, were little.

I think Pikmin 4 is finally going to change all that!

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO RELEASE: JULY 21, 2023 RATING: E10+

Take a look at that massive screenshot above, and join me in jaw-opened awe: No longer will the Pikmin series communicate the size of its cast by offering one big banana at a time, or other isolated items. No – we're going all the way now. We're going *inside.* We're going all the way into a human household, exploring kitchens and living rooms and who knows what other parts of those commonplace places from the very uncommon point of view of creatures who are less than an inch high.

I'm thrilled! I have always adored the Pikmin series, but seeing it at last really lean into the untapped potential of its scale has me extremely excited. If Nintendo's not going to give us Chibi-Robo any more (I'll still take a port of the first game any day, Big N!), we've got Pikmin here picking up the small-hero-in-a-big-house slack.

Let me make another comparison: Have you ever watched The Secret World of Arrietty? It's a Studio Ghibli film from 2010, based on a children's book called The Borrowers. It's about a family of tiny, mouse-sized people who live hiding in the walls of a human home, and they venture out at night to "borrow" things they need to survive. It's not much: One cookie is like a week's worth of food at their size; one piece of cast-off fabric is large enough for them to sew an entire outfit. A fascinating part of the film is watching Arrietty and her father go borrowing in the kitchen – just getting safely down to the floor from up high on a cabinet takes descending on a rope. Climbing to the top of a table requires scaling the equivalent of a 10-story building! I can't wait to see how Pikmin 4 handles all the getting from Point A to Point B in these vast indoor environments. It's going to be great!

*FIRE FIGHTERS*

## RED PIKMIN

Let's individually introduce each of the many different varieties of Pikmin, shall we? Because while many of you readers are probably already familiar with each of them, Pikmin 4 is definitely going to be a new entry point into the series for many. So introductions are surely in order!

Red Pikmin are the original variety of these alien creatures. They're the first kind you meet in every game, and the least complicated to understand – you pluck 'em, you toss 'em. They teach you the basics.

Beyond the tutorial stage, though, Red Pikmin prove their worth throughout the majority of each campaign with their higher-than-average fighting skill, letting them do more damage more quickly in battle than the other varieties. They also are entirely immune to fire! They are plants that can never be burned. So if a spot's too hot, they're the ones to send in!

*SHOCK ABSORBERS*

## YELLOW PIKMIN

The second type of Pikmin introduced in the original game is also the only type to have its specialty change from game to game!

When we first met the Yellow Pikmin, they were introduced as lighter and thus easier to toss up to higher places; that fact has remained in place. But in Pikmin 1, their unique quality is that they're the only kind of Pikmin who can pick up and use Bomb Rocks. That's a critical skill, as those explosives are the only way to blast past big stone barriers in several places – but it also came with a ton of risk, as a misplaced explosion could cause dozens of Pikmin to die by accident.

So Nintendo scrapped that starting with Pikmin 2, and since then Yellows have instead been electricity experts! They can conduct current through their bodies to complete circuits, and no zaps can ever harm them. Much better, I think!

*LET'S GO SWIMMING!*

## BLUE PIKMIN

With Reds representing fire and Yellows retconned in the second game to claim the force of lightning for themselves, the original set of three Pikmin types became an official elemental trio – capped off by the Blue Pikmin and their mastery of all things water!

While most varieties of Pikmin can't swim (and will drown if thrown into a body of water too far away from a shore), Blues can breathe the liquid with their built-in gills and have zero trouble just splashing around. That makes them the only choice for water-covered battlefields or retrieving treasures locked behind lakes or streams.

Pikmin 3 actually upgraded their skills further, letting groups of Blue Pikmin swiftly swim together like schools of fish and easily attack aquatic enemies. It'll be interesting to see them in action again in Pikmin 4 . . . maybe exploring a bathtub?

### THE DO-IT-ALL DOG

One critical method of transportation that will help you get around the house – and every other area – is Pikmin 4's playful pooch, Oatchi. As a constant companion, he can be called upon to ferry your entire army on his back at once, which will be incredibly helpful for getting around quickly, as well as navigating tight spaces. I can't remember how many times I've lost Pikmin to them falling over the edge into water or a pit in the older titles – it's just unwieldy to have 100 little dudes trying to independently walk and follow you. Oatchi condences the whole crew onto a single character!

That's far from his only function, though. This is a truly multitalented mutt, as he can bash through barriers, attack enemies with chomping bites, help bring treasures back to your pod and even use his nose to follow trails of scents for tracking! (That's all in addition to him being big and bulky, which will help when solving weight-based puzzles.)

What's more, almost all of Oatchi's many abilities will be upgradeable! One of your fellow Rescue Corps team members will offer to train Oatchi, and if you take advantage of that, he'll gain more speed, more strength . . . and maybe a stronger sniffer?

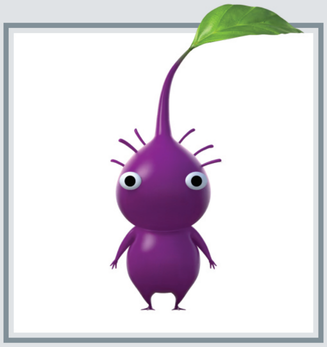
### HOME SWEET HOME BASE

Oatchi's trainer is just one of the allies who'll greet you at an all-new base of operations that you can visit between expeditions into the wild. That's a big change from the series' norm! The in-between of past games has just been menu screens. But Pikmin 4 has a big open area set up next to the Rescue Corps' spaceship, where you can relax, prepare for your next mission and talk with other Corps members.

. . . After you rescue them, that is! At first, the base area will be empty, as a result of your entire team getting flung out across the planet after – of course – crash-landing in the opening.

Planet PNF-404 just causes space explorers to crash-land for some unexplained reason! (Or maybe we will get an explanation this time? I won't count on it.) Pikmin 4's premise is that your team, the Rescue Corps, has been called to the planet to rescue Captain Olimar, because he – of course – crash-landed. But then the Corps also crashes. So who's going to rescue the rescuers? You!

There seem to be a lot of castaways to recover across the planet, but the critical ones will appear back at base after you save them, and offer advice and extra gameplay functionality too. Like offering to upgrade your gear!



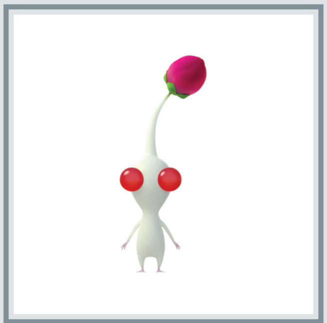
*THE HEAVYWEIGHTS*
## PURPLE PIKMIN

Moving right along, we see here our first of the two new Pikmin species that were first introduced in Pikmin 2. It's Reggie Fils-Aimé's favorite, the burly Purple Pikmin!

With sprigs of hair on their heads and unmistakably bulky bodies, Purple Pikmin are unique and intimidating right at first glance. Their extra heft affects gameplay directly: One Purple Pikmin is as heavy as 10 non-Purples, so switches, platforms or other barriers activated by weight can be overcome by only a handful of these bruisers. Their worth lies in their girth!

That extra poundage also lets them pound their opponents with heavy ground pounds – they pause in the air a moment before dropping on foes below, and stun them if they connect!

Lastly, they're more muscular than most: When they carry something, their lift counts the same as 10 regular 'min!



*TOTALLY TOXIC*
## WHITE PIKMIN

Pikmin 2 brought us the thickest variety of Pikmin with the Purples, as well as the first appearance of the shrimpiest type, the Whites. White Pikmin are thin, stand even shorter than usual and have big, beady red eyes! They look like Pikmin zombies. (Though that's actually another separate thing we won't get into here.)

White Pikmin use their enhanced ocularity to locate obscured treasure buried entirely under the earth. They can detect hidden objects and instantly begin to dig them up, after which time other Pikmin types can join in to help them fully bring them to the surface and carry them back to your team's staging area.

Their most signature trait, though, is their poisonousness! White Pikmin can both endure toxic environments and are also toxic themselves – if an enemy tries to eat one of them and succeeds, they take instant poison damage. Tummyache!

*UNCRUSHABLE!*
## ROCK PIKMIN

And now on to Pikmin 3's new friendly faces! (Wait . . . do Rock Pikmin even have faces? They kind of just look like pet rocks – a pair of googly eyes slapped on stone.) Anywho! Rock Pikmin totally rock.

These stout 'min are as solid as a rock – totally unbreakable. Many of the foes in Pikmin games attack by trying to crush, stomp or otherwise flatten your forces – giant Beady Long Legs spiders with their heavy feet; leaping Wollywog frogs with their smooshing bellies. But Rock Pikmin can't be squashed! You can safely battle those kinds of enemies with confidence when you've got a squad of Rocks at your side.

What's more, they have extra smashing power when thrown! When your Captain hurls a Rock Pikmin, it connects with enemies or obstacles with extra impact. Some barriers can only be broken by a bevy of hurled Rock Pikmin!

### BUILDING YOUR BEST SELF

Some past Pikmin adventures have included ability upgrades throughout the quest, like Pikmin 2 unlocking the "take a nap" ability for Olimar and Louie after they found the Five-Man Napsack treasure. (It's more useful than it sounds.) Pikmin 4 is going all-in on upgrades, though! Finding treasure items this time will add their monetary value to an account, and you can then choose to spend some of your saved-up dough on items like the Rush Boots to increase your standard walking speed, the Scorch Guard to make your suit more fire-resistant or the light-amplifying Headlamp+!

Getting to decide which gear you'll prioritize purchasing is one way you can customize your Captain – but the truly fundamental self-expression will come right at the beginning of the game. That's when you'll make your own custom Captain character!

Yep, Pikmin 4 has a build-your-own-astronaut character creation scene. While the rest of the Rescue Corps will be named NPCs with defined designs, you'll get to design your own self all by yourself. Like Nintendo's Mii Maker interfaces from the Wii, DS, 3DS and Wii U days, you'll pick your face, your hair, your proportions and more. Who will you choose to be?

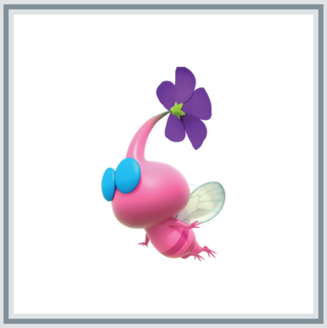
### A NEW (?) RIVAL APPEARS

Speaking of establishing identities, would you care to venture a guess as to who we're looking at in the screenshot below? That shaggy face is new, but that body shape, suit color and bulbous nose I think are some pretty dead giveaways that this is . . . Dead Olimar!

(OK, well, he's clearly not dead.)

The Rescue Corps were dispatched to come to this planet and rescue good old Captain Olimar, the hero of the first two Pikmin games and pretty much still the face of the franchise. But if this is really him, why would said face suddenly look so different?

That Pikmin-esque stem and leaf on top of his noggin is new too . . . except we've seen something similar in one place before. Pikmin 1 has multiple endings, and if you get the Bad Ending in which Olimar's attempt to escape the planet and return home fails, you get to witness him, well, die. But then the Pikmin carry his body to their Onion, and it sucks him up, and it spits him back out as a seedling that lands in the dirt with that same kind of stem newly added to his head. So, could this be that Olimar? Bad Ending Olimar, somehow made canon? Is Pikmin 4 taking place in a different timeline than the previous games?!



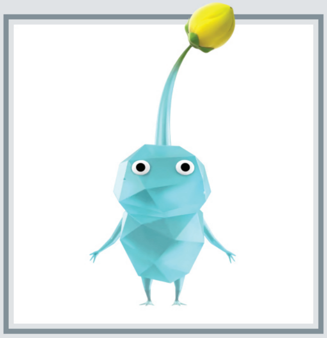
### AIR MAILERS
## WINGED PIKMIN

Just as Pikmin 2 gave us two new types, so too did Pikmin 3. And, just like Pikmin 2, Pikmin 3's two were on two entirely opposite ends of the spectrum!

What's the exact opposite of a heavy rock creature that crashes to the ground with a thud? A featherweight flying friend who never sets foot on terra firma!

The constantly airborne Winged Pikmin are invaluable allies. Though not as beefy or valuable in battle as their grounded counterparts, their ability to lift and carry treasures through the air to ferry them home is incredible. They can simply soar over any obstacles below! They ignore any kind of negative terrain and just make a beeline straight for base.

And they do end up having special utility in fights, too – when the foes are also flying! Winged Pikmin can form a swarm and conquer aerial enemies with a tornadic flurry of blows.

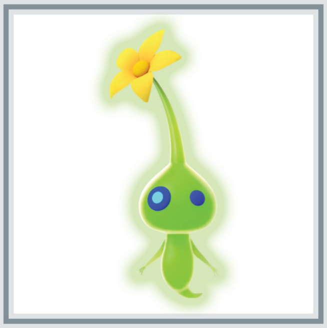


### WINTER BLOOMS
## ICE PIKMIN

From flying friends to frigid friends! The new Ice Pikmin we'll be meeting for the first time in Pikmin 4 are both calling back to the past and moving the series one more step into the future.

The past connection, to me, is adding another element to the array: Red being fire, Yellow being electricity/lightning and Blue being water, it's kind of odd that it took waiting until the fourth main game to get an ice-aligned variety of Pikmin. It's another one of those core elements! Like Pokémon types. (Stay tuned for Ghost-type Pikmin coming up next.)

Ice Pikmin also introduce a fun new strategic tradeoff: You can hurl several of them into a body of water to freeze that body of water and make it walkable – but if you do, the ones you threw stay frozen in place there. So you're giving yourself a new path forward at the expense of depleting your overall fighting force!



### NIGHT GUARDS
## GLOW PIKMIN

The all-new ninth and (for now) final type of Pikmin is here: Glow Pikmin! (We're not going to count Bulbmin or Puffmin. Sorry superfans!)

Glow Pikmin are sparkling specters. Only seen at night (which is a good reason why we've never seen them before!), they live in special mounds of dirt known as Luminols. The Luminols are full of special sap that enemy creatures just love to eat – so the Glow Pikmin have to constantly fight them off to protect their homes!

They have some uniquely ghostly abilities that they can tap into, like teleporting from place to place and hovering over the ground rather than having to walk upon it. They can also work together with one another better than any other Pikmin type can, since they can temporarily turn into light, combine with fellow Glows and form one huge Spirit Orb that can be sent sailing straight toward their enemies!

**DANDORI DUELS**

Whether or not that rival character is Olimar, he's still bad news: He will snatch away castaways with the help of his own Oatchi-equivalent dog, and then he'll challenge you to beat him in a Dandori Battle if you want to rescue them!

What's Dandori? Well, it's a one-on-one treasure-hunting battle in which two Captains compete to snag more items than the other, all taking place in a set-apart and contained arena space where their two teams of Pikmin (and their pooches) can clash against each other. The winner is the Captain who can earn a greater total amount of money in four minutes. There's a lot of strategy involved! Will you go for the most valuable, largest items? Stick with setting your sights on a larger number of smaller targets? Will you attack your opponent to try to trip them up, or ignore them to keep your focus fully on the treasure?

Dandori Battle looks a lot like Bingo Battle, the two-player competitive mode from Pikmin 3. But it's simplified a bit, and injected into the main one-player story as a minigame. It's surely also going to be available for two players, so maybe making it a part of the core campaign is Nintendo's way to get more players to try it out!

**UNDER A MOONLIT SKY**

Finally, we've known for a few months now that Pikmin 4 will finally let us see what happens on PNF-404's surface at nighttime. And now we know that what happens is, apparently, tower defense!

Night expeditions will be their own separate thing, and they'll play totally uniquely: Rather than hunting for treasure in the dark, you'll instead be defending glowing structures full of sap from hungry nocturnal predators. Your helpers in this scenario? The new Glow Pikmin, who apparently will only come out at night. These missions are their time to shine! (Literally!)

Night missions also look like they'll replace the sun timer with a moon one – surely counting down the time until dawn breaks in the morning. If nights last as long as days normally do, then that's going to be a long time to spend defending towers! So that may be only one aspect of this all-new mode. We'll have to see what more there is to it in the final game . . .

**TRY IT NOW!**

. . . which is coming soon, on July 21! But you don't have to wait that long to try it. There's a demo of Pikmin 4 in the eShop right now! So give it a go! It's sure to be massive fun! **— LUCAS**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPERS: NINTENDO & SQUARE ENIX RELEASE: NOVEMBER 17, 2023 RATING: E

# SUPER MARIO RPG

## The SNES classic returns – and the heroes are looking a little squished!

**WELL, THEY'VE FINALLY** done it. After decades of fans hoping and pleading, Nintendo is finally bringing back Super Mario RPG (seemingly dropping the "Legend of the Seven Stars" subtitle) in the form of a full-on remake for the Switch, and it looks spectacular!

Remakes can be tricky though, especially for a game this beloved. Make the wrong tweaks or change the art style too much and you risk alienating longtime fans, or worse. Just look at what happened with the 3DS Mario & Luigi games! Thankfully, this one seems like it's being handled with the utmost care, which is great, because Super Mario RPG was truly in desperate need of this kind of treatment.

Originally released for the Super NES in 1996, Super Mario RPG was a dream collaboration between Nintendo and SquareSoft, and it marked a number of Mario series firsts, including Mario and Bowser teaming up to fight a common enemy.

The original game looked fantastic back when it was released 27 years ago, but modern HD displays have not been kind to it. Utilizing 3D rendered still images as the basis for a game's sprites was common practice back then, but the process of squeezing them into a full-blown RPG on a 16-bit cartridge required the sacrifice of huge amounts of detail, and left the game looking extremely pixelated. That's no longer a problem though, as this new iteration looks leagues better than even the original's promotional art, while still maintaining its unique takes on the characters. Mario and friends are a bit more squat in appearance than usual, but that just makes everyone that much more adorable!

While it's hard to glean any new gameplay details from what we've seen so far, it looks like the game's basic structure hasn't changed. The isometric perspective remains intact, the overworld still features some light platforming elements and contact with foes still triggers turn-based battles, complete with the trademarked timed hits that make combat more active.

Keeping the gameplay unchanged is a great move, because it's honestly as fun to play today as it ever was. It's everything else that was in need of modernization, and what we've seen thus far is very impressive.

The music heard in the trailer has been reimagined beautifully, which is no surprise seeing as it comes by way of Yoko Shimomura, the composer responsible for the original game's score. She's back for the remake, and if what we've heard so far is any indication, this game's soundtrack is really going to be something special.

Of course, it's the visuals that have seen the biggest improvement, and not just in terms of the character models. Mario, Peach, Mallow and Geno all look better than ever, as do the various enemies you'll encounter during the adventure, but they also animate with a level of expression and fluidity the Super NES could never pull off. They've even added a number of cutscenes to help punctuate the game's story, and I don't think it's a stretch to say that seeing Geno riding a rainbow to catch a falling Mallow in glorious fully animated 3D is nothing short of mind-blowingly awesome! What a time to be a Mario RPG fan!

There are still so many unanswered questions about this remake, but it left a heck of a first impression. Super Mario RPG is still considered one of the best games of its era for a reason, and there's never been a better time to introduce a whole new audience to this classic. If Nintendo and Square pull this off, there's no telling what the future of the Mario RPG brand could be! **— KRIS**

# DETECTIVE PIKACHU RETURNS

## More coffee-fueled investigations are coming!

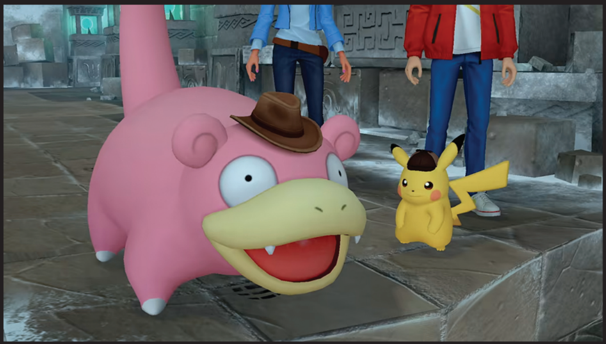
**LIKE A BOLT** of brilliance, it's the return of Detective Pikachu! First teased all the way back in 2019 and finally formally announced in June's Nintendo Direct, Detective Pikachu Returns – the sequel to 2018's Detective Pikachu on the 3DS – will be releasing October 6.

In the first Detective Pikachu, Tim Goodman meets the titular talking Pikachu as he arrives in Ryme City in search of his missing father, private detective Harry Goodman, who disappeared after a mysterious car accident. Tim's investigation pulls him into a conspiracy involving media moguls, illicit drugs and the enigmatic Mewtwo. He and Detective Pikachu, as well as a few human allies, travel throughout the city, examine clues and ask questions to both people and Pokémon – between coffee breaks. Returns appears to pick up several years after the original left off, and Tim and Detective Pikachu are still searching for the truth of what happened to Harry Goodman. Is he still somewhere out there? And what sort of adventures will the dynamic duo find themselves in?

Detective Pikachu's best feature is his expressive character design, done through motion capture that The Pokémon Company took years to perfect – and seeing the soul of a hardboiled detective inhabit the body of a tiny, adorable yellow rodent is always funny to behold. There's also a whole bunch of Pokémon newcomers to Ryme City as well, from Galar and Paldea, as well as a few returning favorites, like the Ludicolo from Hi-Hat Café.

I hope the Detective Pikachu amiibo returns too! **– REBECCA**

SWITCH PUBLISHERS: NINTENDO & THE POKÉMON COMPANY DEVELOPER: CREATURES RELEASE: OCTOBER 6, 2023 RATING: E



# A NEW GAME STARRING PRINCESS PEACH

## She's finally stepping back into a solo spotlight!

**THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM'S** multifaceted monarch hits the stage once again!

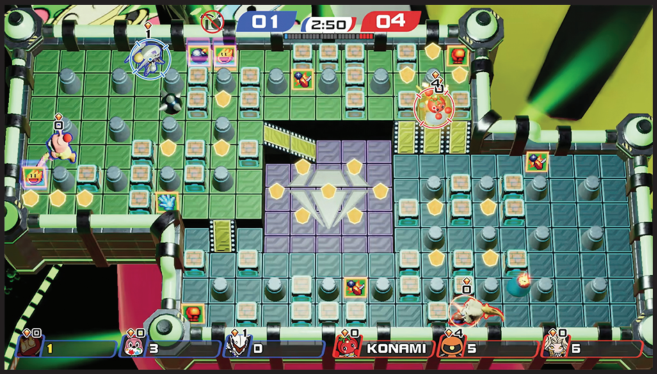
Almost 20 years after Super Princess Peach – her last role as the sole lead character – Peach is finally prepping a return to the spotlight. Details beyond that are scarce: This new game doesn't even have a name yet! All we know for sure is that it's theater-themed, that Peach has some sort of star-shaped fairy assistant following her around and that stepping on certain areas of the stage triggers her to spin into a "magical girl" clothes-altering sequence.

All signs point to Peach getting new abilities from alternate costumes, potentially tasking her to take multiple roles in whatever play she's performing. That would be a step up from the somewhat chauvinistic set of "vibe powers" she got in her last game, where her mood abilities included Joy, Rage, Gloom and Calm. (While we don't think Nintendo meant any ill will by it, it's unlikely that they would have ever made a game where Mario can cry on command.) Thankfully, any negative stereotypes about "overly emotional women" seem to be a thing of the past for this maven of mushrooms.

Now the question on my mind is, "Is this the right time and place for Nintendo to reveal their official take on the 'Bowsette' concept?"

For those who don't know, that's the fan-born musing that if King Koopa were to grab the Princess Crown from New Super Mario Bros. U Deluxe, he'd transform into a fiery hybrid between himself and the Princess. We know Nintendo toyed with a similar idea for Super Mario Odyssey, but they never went through with it. Not to be outdone by her little mustachioed companion's costume changes, this could be Peach's chance to wow players on a similar scale! **– JONATHAN**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO RELEASE: TBA 2024 RATING: RP



# SUPER BOMBERMAN R 2

## Bomberman's Day 1 Switch launch game is finally getting a sequel!

***BOMBERMAN, BOMBERMAN!** Mass destruction, across the land! Makes a bomb, with a twitch! Coming to, Nintendo Switch!*

That's right, Hudson's half-size hero is back in an all-new adventure, courtesy of Konami! Bomberman and his seven robotic brothers, heroic do-gooders all, are out to save the galaxy. The menacing, robotic Black Moon is on a rampage, blowing up whole planets and also threatening to destroy Planet Bomber – so the Bomberman Brothers are out to put a stop to it! They don't have the Matrix of Leadership on their side to light this darkest of hours, but maybe a really big bomb will do? (Or maybe not. It was worth a shot.)

On the other hand, maybe these mysterious new creatures called Ellons they befriend in the ruins of one such exploded planet know something. Hmm, they look kind of familiar, somehow. Can't quite put my finger on it . . . maybe I'll ask Sonic if they remind him of anyone.

They'll no doubt need all the help they can get, as another group of aliens threaten to stand in their way: the Lugion. They're out to collect ore from destroyed planets. Do they have a connection with the Black Moon? Or, for that matter, the Ellons? They kind of look similar, especially with the pacifier and apron-looking devices. Worse still, the unarmed ones can take control of the mech-like Lugibon, which they'll use to attack the heroes!

That's all well and good for the solo mode, but everyone knows that Bomberman games are *really* a blast when you gather a bunch of friends and blow each other to smithereens! That's where the Party Mode comes in. Remember Bomberman 64? Well, get ready for 64 Bombermen in this fan-tastically frenzied fracas! There are classic multiplayer modes, too!

Now, who said that plumbers should have all the building fun? Bombermen can create as well as destroy, and that's what falls to you in the all-new Build-and-Bomb mode. Build your own stage with a variety of defensive gimmicks, terrain options and wall placements, then upload it so Bombermen from all across the globe can come and see if your creation is da bomb, or a bust. You can also use the stages you've built in Castle Mode!

"What's Castle Mode?", you ask? It's an all-new battle mode where players are divided into two teams: Attack (offense) and Castle (defense). The Attack side's goal is to acquire all the keys, unlock all the treasure chests and make for the goal. The Castle side's job is to protect those same chests from falling into the Attack side's hands until the last grain of sand falls through the hourglass, so to speak. If even so much as one treasure chest remains when the clock hits zero, then the Castle side wins!

Additionally, the Castle side can use Ellons and Gimmicks to help in the protection of the precious prizes the pursuers plan to purloin!

For the less creatively inclined, there's no need to fear! Templates are available to help inspire you, or you can simply randomize a level. Or use one of the custom-made levels found online! Let someone else do all the work, while you have all the fun. (Not that creating isn't fun too!)

Oh, and there's one other thing: Suppose your friends or family members *aren't* playing Super Bomberman R 2 on the Nintendo Switch? *(pause for gasps)* No need to fear, because crossplay is here! Now everyone can have a blast together, across all modern systems! **— DAVID**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: KONAMI RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 13, 2023 RATING: E10+

# THE LEGEND OF HEROES: TRAILS INTO REVERIE

## The Crossbell and Erebonia story arcs combine and collide.

**SOME GAMES SERVE** as a start to a series; some provide conclusions for the entries that came before. Then there are others that do both, tying up loose ends from past games and laying the foundation for the future.

Trails into Reverie will fall in this third category when it arrives July 7 on Nintendo Switch. It will provide a conclusion to the series' Crossbell and Erebonia arcs, which include Trails from Zero and Trails to Azure and Trails of Cold Steel I-IV, respectively.

It will also set the stage for future Trails games, namely Kuro no Kiseki and Kuro no Kiseki II: Crimson Sin, which released in Japan in 2021 and 2022 and have yet to come West.

One of the Trails series' greatest strengths is how interconnected the games are in cast, setting and story, but this quality also makes it tough to know where to start. If you are new to the series, don't start with Trails into Reverie. It relies on a lot of prior knowledge of the series.

(Trails from Zero is your best starting point on Switch. Other entry points include Trails in the Sky on PC or Trails of Cold Steel on PC or PS4.)

But if you're a longtime Trails fan, it's safe to say Trails into Reverie is made just for you, thanks to its combination of series traditions and new offerings!

Reverie will bring back characters from past games, including members of the Special Support Section, Class VII, and cast members from Trails in the Sky. It also utilizes the series' turn-based AT Battle System, where you manipulate turn order to your advantage and use characters' special Crafts and elemental Arts in battle.

Now on to the new features — and they include some firsts for the series!

One of the biggest changes in Reverie is telling the game's story through the perspectives of three protagonists: Lloyd Bannings of the Crossbell games, Rean Schwarzer of the Cold Steel games and a new character, the mysteriously named C.

Lloyd, Rean and C will have their own routes in Reverie's story. Via the new Trails to Walk system, players will have agency in how they view the different routes within each chapter. Sometimes, the characters' paths will cross, or they may visit the same locations at different times.

Trails stories have a reputation of being quite long, so it'll be interesting to see how these changes in perspective affect the story's flow and pacing.

Reverie will also include a new area called the True Reverie Corridor. It will function as an ever-expanding dungeon with side activities. You can compose unique teams of Trails cast members, take on challenges and explore randomly generated areas. Progressing through the Corridor will also unlock character side stories.

Combat will receive an addition called United Fronts, which can activate when you have five or more characters in your party and provide major buffs, heals and attacks.

In addition to a standard retail release, Reverie is also being offered with a Deluxe Edition that includes a digital soundtrack and mini art book, as well as a Limited Edition that adds a SteelBook, acrylic print and a novel, among other collectible items!

As a longtime fan of the series, I can't wait to see how Reverie sends off its beloved cast, how it will tease what's next and how all these trails will inevitably intersect! **— MAGGIE**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: NIS AMERICA
DEVELOPER: NIHON FALCOM
RELEASE: JULY 7, 2023 RATING: T

SCREENSHOTS TAKEN FROM THE PLAYSTATION 5 VERSION

# RHAPSODY:
## MARL KINGDOM CHRONICLES

### Two never-before-translated adventures in one!

**YOU'VE LIKELY PLAYED** JRPGs with intense dungeon crawling, weighty themes and tragic characters. But what about JRPGs all about music, goofy humor and falling in love?

Those are the staples of the Rhapsody series, and two of its entries will soon get a Western release for the first time!

Both Rhapsody II: Ballad of the Little Princess and Rhapsody III: Memories of Marl Kingdom will arrive August 29 on Switch in a bundle, dubbed Rhapsody: Marl Kingdom Chronicles. They were originally released in Japan in 1999 and 2000 for the PlayStation and PS2, respectively.

In Rhapsody II, you take on the role of Princess Kururu, who is the daughter of the first game's hero, Cornet. Kururu begins a quest to find her own Prince Charming in the colorful and storybook-esque Marl Kingdom.

The game features turn-based combat where you equip puppets and create a musical staff with notes to trigger special effects. These can lead to cute attack animations: For example, a pile of giant pancakes falling on enemies.

Rhapsody III presents an anthology of stories in Marl Kingdom across different time periods, with tales about Kururu, Cornet and Cornet's mother Cherie. Its turn-based combat will have a new 3D camera and teams of up to 16 characters that you can customize.

If you want to give the Rhapsody series a test run before August, the first game, Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure, is available via last year's Prinny Presents NIS Classics Volume 3 bundle! **— MAGGIE**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER: NIS AMERICA DEVELOPER: NIPPON ICHI RELEASE: AUGUST 29, 2023 RATING: T

# ATELIER MARIE REMAKE:
## THE ALCHEMIST OF SALBURG

### The first-ever Atelier game, now beautifully redone!

**AS ITS RYZA** games continue to break sales records, Gust's long-running Atelier series has never been more popular. Now, Western fans will soon be able to see how it all began for Atelier, via a remake of the series' first game.

Atelier Marie Remake: The Alchemist of Salburg embodies the themes we've often seen in the series: It takes place in a cozy, fantasy setting; you take on the role of a spunky heroine; crafting remains at the center of the gameplay loop and turn-based combat and character events supplement the experience.

In this game, you play as Marie, a carefree student at the Royal Academy of Magic. In order to graduate, she must create an item worthy of her teachers' praise within five years. The game operates on a calendar system, so you've got a time limit to ensure Marie succeeds!

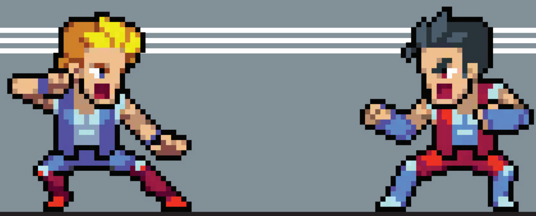
The remake's new features aim to make the game's laid-back experience even more so. It includes a new Unlimited Mode, where you can play without having to worry about the deadline, and a guide called Professor Ingrid's Tasks, which provides direction if you get stuck.

Other additions include new 2D illustrations of the characters, adorable 3D chibi character models, more social events and improved minigame controls and gameplay balancing.

The Atelier Marie remake will arrive July 13 on Switch. It initially released on PlayStation and Sega Saturn in 1997 in Japan, and this remake will mark its first official release in the West. More than 25 years later!

It will be available digitally via the eShop, but if you want to snag a physical copy, you'll have to import it from sites like Play-Asia. (Despite the series' success, we still aren't getting retail releases of all its titles in the States!) **— MAGGIE**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: KOEI TECMO RELEASE: JULY 13, 2023 RATING: E10+



# DOUBLE DRAGON GAIDEN: RISE OF THE DRAGONS

## The Lee Brothers return – and Marian's packing heat!

**OF ALL THE** long-running video game series out there, Double Dragon may be the least consistent. This brand has included arcade and console classics, a live-action movie, a fighting game, an animated series, a terrible remake, an insane reboot and more. But no matter what happens, Billy and Jimmy Lee just don't quit, and their latest release looks like a return to form – or at least it would, if the series had much of a form to return to.

Whereas the over-the-top Double Dragon Neon and the arguably way-too-old-school Double Dragon IV left many fans at odds, Double Dragon Gaiden seems like it's aiming to split the difference. Gaiden has an interesting visual style: It's pixelated, but also modern. Character portraits are realistically proportioned, but in-game sprites are super deformed. It's a little odd, but it's got a ton of personality, and more importantly, everything moves really nicely.

As for the gameplay, Gaiden is taking the whole "Double Dragon" thing to heart by crafting an experience that relies heavily on teamwork. Each player can choose two different characters to switch between at will. This opens up a ton of awesome offensive and defensive combo opportunities that look flashy and fun to pull off.

The confirmed characters include both Billy and Jimmy Lee, the sometimes love interest/sometimes dead Marian, and a new character named Uncle Matin. The Lee Brothers play exactly how you'd expect: They're nimble, have lots of punches, kicks and jump kicks, etc. Then there's Marian, who appears in this reality to be a weapons expert (as opposed to the punching powerhouse she played as in River City Girls 2). She'll now use everything from land mines to handguns, which is especially hilarious considering the opening sequence of Double Dragon II's arcade version. (Look it up, kids!) And finally, we have Uncle Matin. He's a heavy character with a riot shield that he uses to beat the snot out of any street punks foolish enough to get in his way, and whose name is a fun Easter egg for us old people. There's said to be a total of 13 playable characters, so it will be interesting to see who else makes the cut. I'm hoping for a playable Abobo!

Of all the beat-'em-ups coming out soon, this looks like one of the most promising. Here's hoping Secret Base can pull it off and create a new Double Dragon worthy of the name! **– KRIS**

SWITCH
PUBLISHER: MODUS GAMES
DEVELOPER: SECRET BASE
RELEASE: JULY 27, 2023 RATING: E10+

# DISNEY ILLUSION ISLAND

## It's almost time to set out on a new adventure with Mickey, Minnie, Donald & Goofy!

**I'M WORRIED ABOUT** the zoom.

I mean, take a look at that screenshot up there. That's about as big as we can print a screen from a game. And yet, even at that supersized scale, each of the four hero characters looks teeny-tiny!

We're focusing this issue on "little guys," true, but we really mean short, or small of stature. Not characters who are supposedly comparable to human size within the context of their own game worlds, but who appear at eye-strainingly small sizes on-screen during gameplay!

Now, that screen may just be an extreme example. Since Disney Illusion Island is a multiplayer-focused adventure, and since the characters' distances are fairly spread apart in that shot – with Minnie on the left edge and Goofy on the right – it's likely we're just seeing a dynamic camera at work, zooming itself out in that moment in order to keep all of the players visible in the frame. It may well have zoomed right back in mere moments after that shot was snapped.

Still, I'm worried.

Another cause for concern? My assertion that all four of the different heroes have his or her own unique moves, from our first preview of this game three issues ago, has been officially proven wrong. The developers have come out and confirmed that all four of them play exactly alike! So it's no longer a Super Mario 3D World kind of situation, with each player getting access to special skills like Peach's floating long jumps or Toad's extra-quick running speed. It's now more of a New Super Mario Bros. Wii arrangement, with characters who are visually distinct from one another, but who all move in the exact same way.

That's a bummer! I had myself hyped up for a quest in which Mickey, Minnie, Donald and Goofy would each have their own role to play. But no.

Rather than lament what this game isn't, though, it is worth being excited for what it is: a creatively conceived, Metroidvania-inspired platforming challenge with a passion for pacifism! The developers at Dlala have deviated from the video gaming norm and created a game that contains no combat. You're not hopping on bad guys' heads here, or blasting them with weapons. There may not even be many "bad guys" in the mix at all! Instead, the environment itself is the obstacle to overcome, as the devs have focused fully on crafting platforming challenges for players to take on – either solo, or with up to three couch co-op allies. It could be a great family game! . . . I just hope I'll be able to see my character. **– LUCAS**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: DISNEY INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: DLALA STUDIOS
RELEASE: JULY 28, 2023 RATING: E

# EVERYBODY 1-2-SWITCH!

## Just how much of a trainwreck is this about to be?!

**WELP, THEY'RE SENDING** it out to die.

Exactly one year ago, in our July/August 2022 issue, we ran a first report about this game. A sequel to the Day 1 launch title named 1-2-Switch! from 2017, Everybody 1-2-Switch! had seemingly been stuck in development muck for years – because it stinks.

Playtesters hated it. Nintendo's most cheerful and positive employees couldn't stand it for more than a few minutes. It was one of the most severely un-fun video games the Big N had ever had the misfortune to make!

. . . And now you too can experience its torture!

Honestly, it's been a year since those ruinous insider reports came to light, so it's possible – *possible* – that the game has since been improved. It's not like Nintendo to just unleash a total failure of a game onto the public.

But that certainly seems like what's happening here! Everybody 1-2-Switch! was unceremoniously announced on social media on June 2, less than a month before its on-sale date of June 30. Its product page on Nintendo.com held only two images, both of which we've printed here: the insane horse host promo art above and a single "screenshot" below. They even left it entirely out of the June Direct!

Part of last year's report said boxes had already been printed for this game, so Nintendo's elected to use them rather than send them to a landfill. And this game could still sell well! 1-2-Switch! moved over 3,450,000 copies, and plenty of its players would probably enjoy a sequel! But I'd be extremely wary if I were you. "Enjoyment" may not be included here! **– LUCAS**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO RELEASE: JUNE 30, 2023 RATING: E

# MORTAL KOMBAT 1

## A storyline reboot, and kind of a gameplay one too?

**SPEAKING OF BEING** sent out to die, the fighting game series that made a name for itself by featuring gruesome Fatalities is coming back for yet another sequel! But this time, they've stopped counting upward.

While most fans expected the next MK sequel to be named Mortal Kombat 12 (seeing as how the last one was Mortal Kombat 11), we'll instead next be introduced to Mortal Kombat 1. It's a confusing name, to be sure – I've already had trouble with Google results pulling up information on the series' first game from 30 years ago – but it's been chosen to represent a fresh start for the series. A "blank slate," according to protagonist Liu Kang.

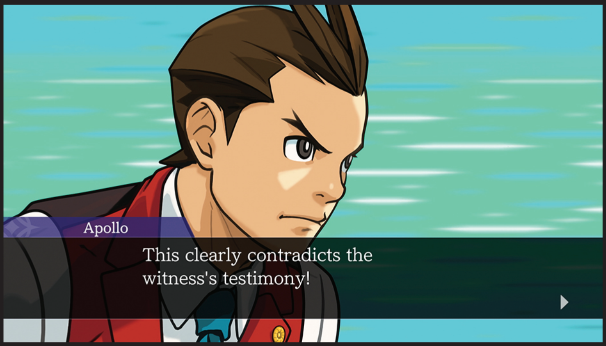
But this is not the same Liu Kang we've known for three decades! At the end of Mortal Kombat 11, he was granted the powers of a god – so he's now "Fire God Liu Kang," and he has used his burning hands to forge an all-new reality.

Taking the place of the old series timeline, Fire God Liu's newly reimagined world is full of familiar faces – but unfamiliar alignments. Scorpion and Sub-Zero, sworn foes in every previous MK game, seem to be fighting together as brothers in this new story. Likewise, the sisters Kitana and Mileena seem to have set their long-running rivalry aside. Thunder God Raiden? Since Liu is the deity in charge now, he looks to have been downgraded to normal human status.

Changes in the story's status quo aren't all we can expect to see, though – the series' core combat has also been altered. There's a new emphasis on "Kameo" fighters who'll jump in to aid your primary Kombatant during matches: Old-school MK icons like Kano, Sonya Blade and Jax are confirmed for this secondary roster, and you'll pick one of them to join your main fighter in each confrontation.

Who else will make the cut? We'll see soon, as MK1 is just a few months away from launch. Will you be ready to test your might all over again, in a new reality? **– LUCAS**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. DEVELOPERS: NETHERREALM STUDIOS, SHIVER ENT. & SABER INT. RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 RATING: M




# APOLLO JUSTICE: ACE ATTORNEY TRILOGY

## Court is back in session!

**FOR THOSE OF** you who missed out on the Nintendo 3DS Ace Attorney games when the eShop shut down earlier this year, your cries for justice have been answered! Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney, Dual Destinies and Spirit of Justice are all being rereleased in the Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney Trilogy on the Nintendo Switch!

The Apollo Justice trilogy introduced all sorts of new characters and scientific and fantastic elements to criminal investigations, such as forensic science, catching lies with body language, high-tech psychoanalysis and divination seances, as well as the Psyche Locks and spirit channeling from the original trilogy. The move to the Nintendo 3DS also resulted in the graphics and music quality being bumped up, and if the beautiful visuals and sound from 2021's The Great Ace Attorney Chronicles' port to the Switch are any indication, they'll be better than ever.

Apollo Justice is the primary character in the first game of the trilogy, where he and his stage magician assistant Trucy clash with glam rock prosecutor Klavier Gavin, as a disbarred Phoenix Wright waits in the wings for his eventual comeback. In Dual Destinies, the series' first native 3DS title, Phoenix and Apollo are joined by rookie attorney Athena Cykes against Simon Blackquill — a prosecutor despite serving a lengthy jail sentence — as they unravel the tangled conspiracies that have ensnared justice. Finally, Spirit of Justice has the Wright Anything Agency up against their most dangerous foe yet: the legal system of the Kingdom of Khura'in, where defense attorneys share the same fate as guilty criminals.

Hopefully the DLC cases, special features and accessibility support that was in The Great Ace Attorney Chronicles will be included, but that jury's still out! **— REBECCA**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: CAPCOM RELEASE: EARLY 2024 RATING: RP

# MOVING OUT 2

## It's almost time to get moving again. So pack it up!

**MY NEIGHBORS FROM** three doors down (to the left) just moved out. My other neighbors from three doors down (to the right) also just moved out. Across the street? One of the original owners in this 30-year-old neighborhood has put a For Sale sign in her yard, and she's started holding Open House events. Clearly, it's her intention to move out.

Everybody's leaving!

While the current housing market seems too insane to me to even begin to contemplate packing everything up and relocating, there are clearly plenty of folks who've gotten sick of seeing the same surroundings that saw them through the last few years of pandemic life, and they're now off in search of greener pastures. I think it's smart timing, then, that the developers behind Moving Out are just about ready to ship a sequel to their silly sim about the moving process!

The original Moving Out debuted in April 2020 — a time when no one was moving anywhere. Still, it was hilariously relatable, as just about everyone has some experience with the chaotic mess that naturally occurs when you try to take every object you own out of your current home and get it all moved out to a truck or van or too-cramped car trunk. Moving Out took that real-world frustration and made it into game-world fun, putting a special emphasis on physics. (And also letting you just wreck everything in sight too. Need to get a huge sofa shifted, but the hall's too small? Smash a window and toss it straight out into the front yard!)

Moving Out 2 looks to be more of the same, with the key addition of online functionality for the four-mover multiplayer. The original only had couch co-op! (That's still the best way to play with friends, but it was hard to make sessions happen safely given it released just one month into Covid lockdowns.) Now, though? Everyone's ready to move! **— LUCAS**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER: TEAM17 DEVELOPERS: SMG STUDIO & DEVM GAMES RELEASE: AUGUST 15, 2023 RATING: E

# WARIOWARE: MOVE IT!

## Microgames made to get your body moving!

**DID WARIO JUST** turn himself into a train engine?! That could only mean one thing: Traditionally weird WarioWare is back! After taking a more conventional turn with WarioWare: Get It Together!, which let you consistently control the franchise's colorful cast of characters, WarioWare: Move It! is poised to keep you guessing (and gesticulating) in a much wilder way.

Like with WarioWare: Smooth Moves on the Wii, Move It! is all about full-body motion controls. That might be a turn-off for some, but seeing as Smooth Moves sold over 2,000,000 copies, we can guess that plenty of people are pumped to wiggle, thrust and giggle once again with this garlic-loving gremlin of a man.

How you pose is important too! One microgame takes you back to Wave Race 64, except now your legs are ridiculously long, requiring you to take an ultra-wide stance to avoid rocks. Another has one player pitching a ball while a second swings at it with a bat. Is that a reference to Yuji Naka's WiiWare cult classic Let's Catch? If so, I hope he gets some residuals. (He probably needs them now more than ever.)

That multiplayer microgame is just one of many. A new board game-style mode for groups of players works to organize the bulk of them. With over 200 micro-games in all and a massive variety of art styles and perspectives to take in, this may be the most unhinged WarioWare yet. We'll find out just how wacky this one gets in November! **— JONATHAN**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPERS: NINTENDO & INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS RELEASE: NOVEMBER 3, 2023 RATING: E10+

# PERSONA 5 TACTICA

## The Phantom Thieves are back . . . in chibi form!?

**IT'S NOT SURPRISING** to see yet another Persona 5 spin-off, but it's just perfect that this latest one, Persona 5 Tactica, fits the theme of this issue!

In P5T, the Phantom Thieves find themselves transported to a strange medieval world, and the game's art style reduces them to adorable chibi-like forms. But don't let their cuteness fool you: The thieves have their work cut out for them when they arrive.

A military group known as the Legionnaires oppress the people of this realm. The Phantom Thieves get on their bad side pretty quickly, then join forces with the impulsive and mysterious Erina the Revolutionary to fight back.

As its name suggests, P5T will take core concepts of Persona 5 and meld them with tactical RPG gameplay. Though we have limited story details, it's clear it will have the base game's same themes of rebellion and freedom.

During battle, you'll control three characters at a time on a grid and adjust your position to attack enemies either close up or far away. Characters can use basic attacks, ranged attacks and Persona abilities.

Mechanics such as 1MORE (where you get a bonus attack after hitting a foe's weakness) and All-Out Attacks will also make a return. In P5T, All-Out Attacks get a neat addition, as the three characters will form a triangle around downed enemies and execute a powerful strike called Triple Threat.

Other returning features include the Persona fusion system and new music by Lyn, who's provided vocals for Persona 5's soundtrack. The game will also release Day 1 DLC called "Repaint Your Heart," including new story episodes and additions to the battle system.

Every time I think we've seen the last of Persona 5, it shows up 1MORE time! (It initially released in 2017.) But it will be interesting to see how P5T will bring something fresh to the formula. **— MAGGIE**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: ATLUS RELEASE: NOVEMBER 17, 2023 RATING: RP

# SUPER MARIO BROS. WONDER

## An all-new sidescrolling Super Mario adventure through a weird and wacky wonder world!

**MARIO'S ORIGINAL MAKERS** are making Mario once more!

For the majority of the last decade, Nintendo's shuffled the responsibility for making new 2D sidescrolling Mario content onto the players themselves. The results have been incredible – the communities of construction that got built up around Super Mario Maker in 2015 and again surrounding Super Mario Maker 2 in 2019 have been a joy to be a part of, and I'm thrilled that Nintendo decided to hand over the keys to the Mushroom Kingdom in that way.

But I'm also thrilled that they've now taken them back! For the first time since New Super Mario Bros. U in 2012, we're finally get a new mainline sidescrolling Mario sequel packed full of wonderfully fresh ideas: Super Mario Bros. Wonder!

The "New" branding has been laid to rest, and with it the mostly sterile style that had defined those installments in the greater Mario series. In its place is a bold, colorful and truly strikingly expressive new art style that infuses Mario and the world around him with a ton of eye-catching personality! Every frame of animation has clearly been thoughtfully reworked, as common actions like jumping and ducking and spinning around – all things we've seen Mario do for decades – now all feel fresh and new.

At its foundation, Super Mario Bros. Wonder is the sidescrolling Mario we've seen since 1985: run to the right, stomp on enemies, bop Question Blocks to grab power-ups and make it to the flagpole at the end of the level to win. But Wonder wildly embellishes on those core elements, especially when our hero grabs the new Wonder Flower item. When that happens, the whole world warps and changes in some weird way, like Warp Pipes coming to life, gravity shifting directions, Mario being instantly shape-changed into another form or some other wacky minigame-like event.

Whatever the weird challenge is, if you're able to overcome it, you'll earn a new collectable called a Wonder Seed. There appear to be at least two Seeds in each stage, and gathering up a bunch of them will unlock access to extra levels later on.

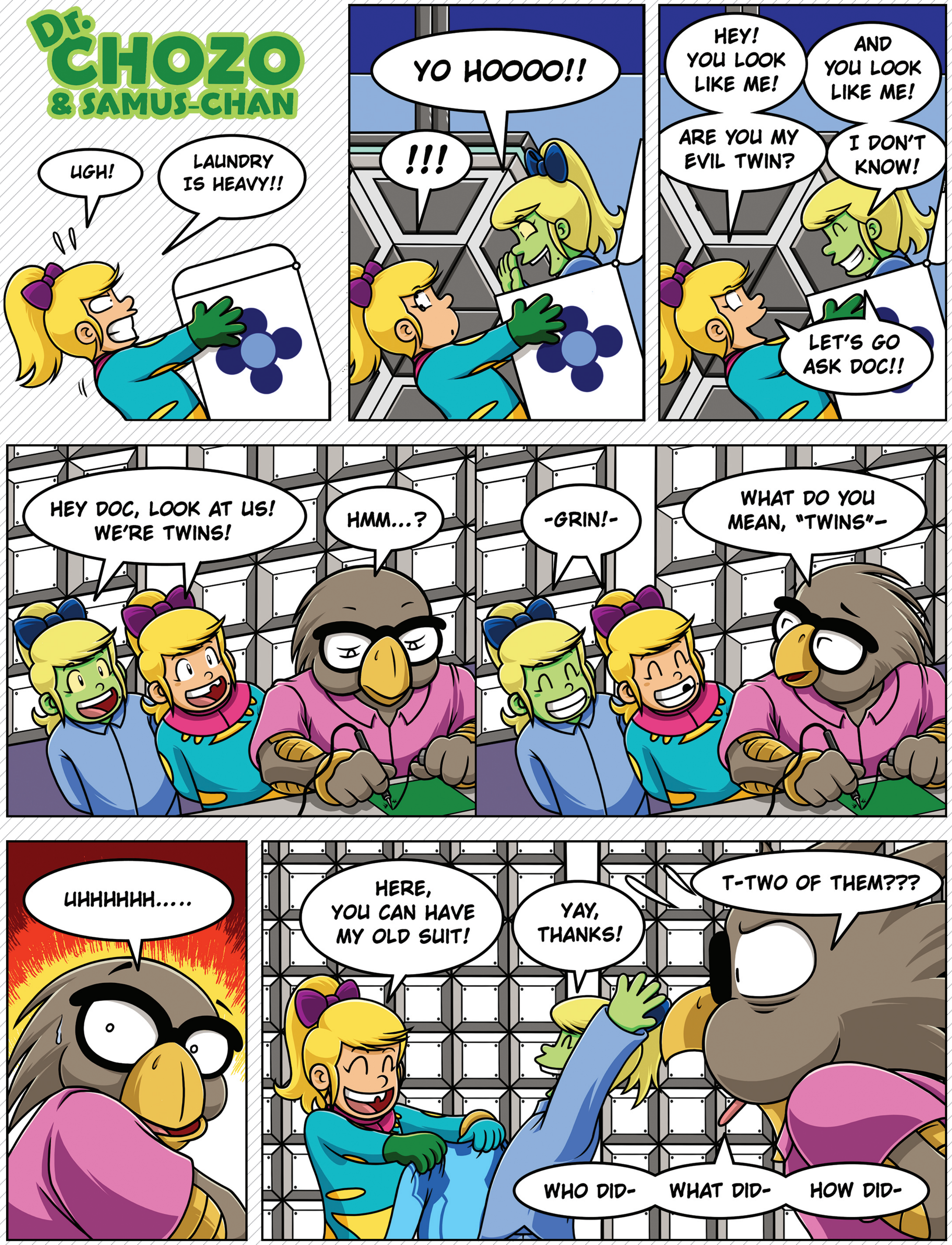
Super Mario Bros. Wonder is a four-player co-op adventure like the New Super Mario Bros. games on Wii and Wii U/Switch were before, but unlike those predecessors it looks like there's no collision between characters this time – so you won't be bouncing off one another or accidentally bop each other into a pit. ("Accidentally.") Some multi-character interactions are still on the table, though, like riding on a Yoshi's back: Yoshi is now a playable character in his own regard, but other players can still jump into his saddle to be carried across long gaps with his signature flutter jumps.

Also newly added to the playable roster: Princess Daisy! She'll make her mainline Mario debut here. And it's about time, too!

Probably the most intriguing new playable face pops up after Mario nabs a new power-up, though: He can transform into Elephant Mario! And it's not like Raccoon Mario or Frog Mario with him clearly still being human and just wearing a costume inspired by some creature – his body fulls shifts into pachyderm form, with his nose elongating until it becomes a trunk. Whoa!

There's a whole elephant load of more details to dig into with Super Mario Bros. Wonder, so don't miss the next NF issue! **– LUCAS**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO RELEASE: OCTOBER 20, 2023 RATING: RP

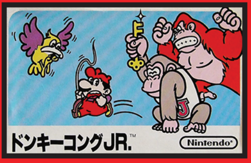



BY THOR THORVALDSON

# RETRO

## CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE FAMICOM!

**NINTENDO'S ORIGINAL 8-BIT HARDWARE LAUNCH IN JAPAN:**
JULY 15, 1983



Lordy, lordy, Nintendo's home consoles are 40!

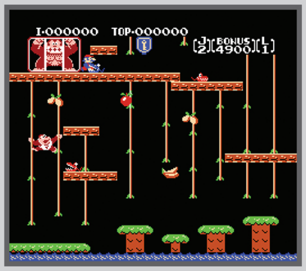
Though gamers in America couldn't get their hands on the Nintendo Entertainment System until late in 1985 (at the earliest), the Big N began to make their transition from arcades to living rooms in Japan in the summer of 1983. On July 15 that year, the Nintendo Famicom first went on sale!

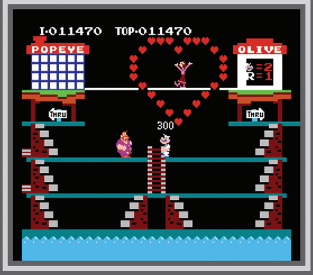
And when it did, it looked a lot different than the NES design we got in the States a couple years later. The Famicom had a bold white and red color scheme, with a touch of gold applied to the controllers. Speaking of the controllers, they were permanently attached to the system! The multi-use ports to plug and unplug controllers and other peripherals weren't introduced until the console came to America.

Those two constantly connected gamepads had another difference, too: Controller II had a built-in microphone! It got the axe on the way to America as well.

Finally, the Famicom was a top-loader, as opposed to the VCR-like front-loading design NOA went with in our region. Though a later NES revision did offer top-loading of cartridges almost a decade after the system's Stateside launch!

As for the Day 1 software lineup in Japan – it was a bit thin. Only three games were available for the Famicom's earliest adopters to play, and all three of them were ports of Nintendo arcade titles. There was Donkey Kong (which sadly didn't include all four of the stages from its coin-op counterpart), its sequel Donkey Kong Jr. (which was a little more robust) and Popeye, which was a fine game, but suffered by not being able to use the top-tier gameplay ideas that Mr. Miyamoto had already used for Donkey Kong. Understandably, the Famicom was not an overnight success – it took time to find its footing. But eventually it did, and 40 years later look how far we've come! — **LUCAS**





# 30 YEARS LATER
# THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING

The ambitious Game Boy adventure that looked great and played like a dream!

**WHEN IT COMES** to the Zelda series, some feel that bigger is better. But the reality is, one of the most influential games in the franchise is also one of the smallest!

Link's Awakening tried its best to impress. Its overworld is the same size as the one found in A Link to the Past, the seminal SNES classic that directly preceded it. But unlike that game, Link's Awakening only had one overworld. There was no "Dark World" alternate map to explore. It was still amazing in 1993 to see a Game Boy title that could even come close to the scale and detail of a 16-bit title, but there's no denying that Link's Awakening was less a sprawling epic, and more a bite-sized break from the norm.

Knowing that the game would never be a technical powerhouse freed its creative team to approach it with a level of levity rarely seen in AAA development today. In a 2016 interview with Game Informer, director Takashi Tezuka explained that, "With Link's Awakening, we were working on that after our other work was done. Kind of like a club of people who loved Zelda and got together to make it. We didn't really have permission to do it necessarily. We were just playing around. Because we started it that way, just making a game we wanted to make, it may defy Zelda conventions. It might have interesting characters and situations we may not have had otherwise."

This list of things that Link's Awakening did differently is a long and winding one. Instead of a violent sword, Link's first item is a pacificist shield. It's also the first game that allowed him to go fishing, use a telephone, jump in the overworld and dive down to explore fully submerged areas, though it's also the first Zelda to take place outside of Hyrule. Strangely enough, the tropical island where this adventure is set is positively dripping with denizens from Mario's Mushroom Kingdom, including Goombas and Chain Chomps. There's even a meeting with Wart, the amphibian king of dreams of Super Mario Bros. 2! His appearance is just a hint of the twist that lies in store for players who manage to get through the Link's Awakening's eight dungeons and experience its ending for themselves.

Recently, it was revealed that its surprise finale – and who knows what other parts of the game – may have been influenced by Mark Frost, the co-creator of the classic surrealist soap opera Twin Peaks. On May 9, 2023, he tweeted in reference to an article about Link's Awakening, "Anybody ever play this? I met with them about it and gave them some ideas, never tried it myself." This caused the thousands of fans of both Twin Peaks and Link's Awakening to lose their collective minds. Again, without spoiling it, anyone who's seen how both Link's Awakening and Twin Peaks wrap up will understand why.

The parallels between Animal Crossing and Link's Awakening are less cryptic. There is an entire section of the island dedicated to an "Animal Village" that essentially functions like a prototype of Nintendo's now massively successful life simulation series. The original Animal Crossing actually used the same screen-by-scrolling-screen top-down structure as Link's Awakening and most other 2D Zeldas, making the similarities all the more striking.

In short, Link's Awakening still stands as the most independently spirited, trend-bucking Zelda of all time, and its wildly original ways went on to influence the thinking behind countless other titles. The original release of the game has just turned 30 years old, but its age hasn't done much to dampen its relevance. It's actually the most frequently remade 2D Zelda, with both a color "DX" version for the Game Boy Color in 1998 (complete with exclusive Game Boy Camera features) and a total reimagining for Switch in 2019, not to mention inclusion on the Legend of Zelda Game & Watch unit in 2021.

But a direct sequel to the game has been slept on for too long! Maybe we're just dreaming, but Link's Awakening 2: Sleepy Tears of the Animal Kingdom has a great ring to it. **– JONATHAN**

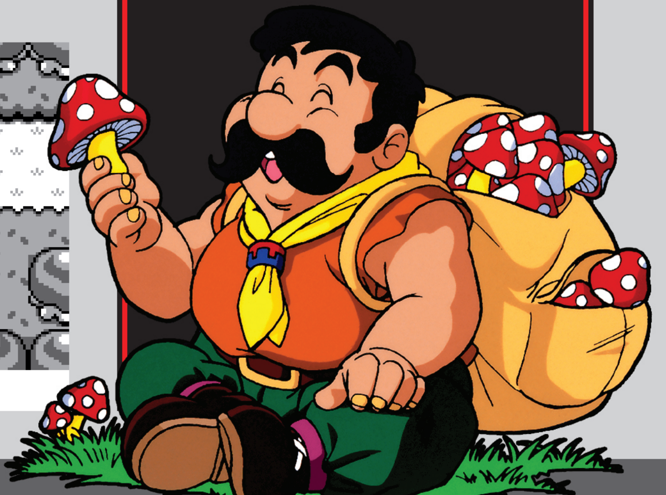
ORIGINAL RELEASE: GAME BOY, AUGUST 6, 1993 PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

## PLAYING IT TODAY

Switch owners currently have two versions of Link's Awakening available to them! The colorized DX port from the Game Boy Color in 1998 is part of Switch Online's subscribers' library. (That's the only version that has the photographer sidequests.) Then there's also the fully polygonal 2019 Switch remake that has a lot more new stuff than that, like Dampé's dungeon building mode, not to mention the totally new graphics and quality-of-life improvements. But if you want the four-toned, color-free original, the only way to go (aside from scrounging for a classic Game Boy cartridge) is the Zelda Game & Watch portable console, which currently goes for between $36 and $50.

## CALL AGENT COOPER

If you're enjoying the cozy mysteries and magical realism in Tears of the Kingdom's story quests, you may have both Link's Awakening and an early '90s TV show to thank for it. Years ago, in one of Satoru Iwata's famous "Iwata Asks" interviews, Takashi Tezuka revealed that the strange, small town story of Twin Peaks was the primary narrative inspiration for Link's Awakening. Eiji Aonuma, who has worked on every major Zelda title since that time, then confirmed that the staff of Ocarina of Time and Majora's Mask all played Link's Awakening too, which "gave them a sense of how far they could go with the Zelda series." Shigeru Miyamoto, also present for the interview, capped off the topic by telling Mr. Tezuka that he "broadened what was permissible for The Legend of Zelda without even trying." So indirectly, Twin Peaks helped shape the Zelda series into what it is today. Thanks David Lynch! (Seek it out on a streaming service if you dare. It's a wild ride of a show for sure!)



ORIGINAL RELEASE: E-READER CARDS, SPRING 2004 PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

## PLAYING THEM ALL TODAY

Seeking out and playing Plucking Pikmin, Marching Pikmin and Connecting Pikmin would have been difficult enough back when they'd just been made available in Japan – now that so many years have gone by since then, it'd be an even more enormous undertaking. You'd need Japan's version of the e-Reader accessory, a Game Boy Advance from Japan too (or a Japanese GameCube, Game Boy Player and copy of Pikmin 2), and beyond all that you'd also need to track down the cards themselves. Most of them were sold in packs – I'm seeing some sealed packs going for $45 apiece on eBay – but some cards were only distributed as promotional items in Japanese magazines of the era, like Weekly Famitsu. Getting the whole set would be expensive! (eBay's got a Buy It Now listing for $1,345 if money's no object for you!) Thankfully, all of these games can now also be played via emulation. So Google that!

# LOST IN UNTRANSLATION
# PIKMIN 2-E

## The three e-Reader minigames that never made it to America!

**WHILE OUR HISTORY** feature earlier in this issue covered almost the entirety of the Pikmin series up to this point, there was one small trilogy of titles we held off on mentioning until now: the three puzzle games that were made for the Game Boy Advance e-Reader accessory two decades ago, and have still never come to America in any form!

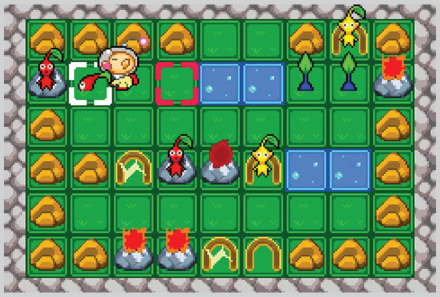
Pikmin 2-e – also known as Pikmin Puzzle Cards-e – was a set of three puzzle genre minigames starring the Pikmin characters. Because they were designed for the GBA e-Reader, all of their game information was stored in rows of tiny dots printed on physical cards. You'd use one card at a time, swipe it through the e-Reader's scanning slot, and a few puzzles would be loaded into the unit's memory. You'd clear those, then need to pick up and scan another card to load in more puzzles to play.

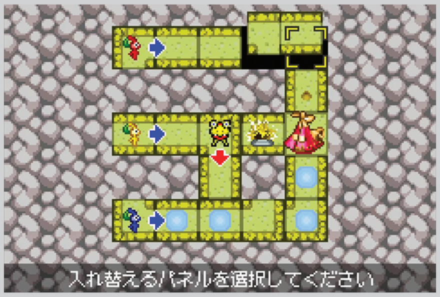
The first of the three games was called Hikkonuki Pikmin, or "Plucking Pikmin." In it, you'd control either Olimar or Louie on a small grid of tiles, walking around and plucking different colors of Pikmin out of the ground. The puzzling part was the Pikmin's placement after being plucked: Reds and Blues would fly to land on the spot directly behind the current Captain, while Yellows would soar one extra square further. You had to ensure each Pikmin landed safely – no tossing a Red or a Yellow into a water tile, for instance – but even trickier than that was the fact that once a Pikmin was in its final position, it could no longer be moved. And it would be a permanent roadblock, keeping you from walking across that tile again! So don't box yourself in!

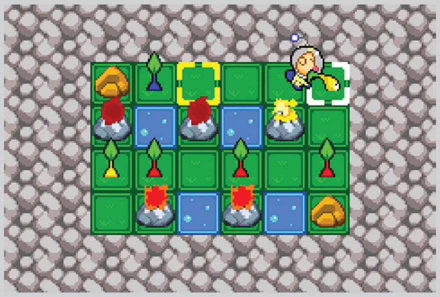
The second game was named Tekuteku Pikmin, or "Marching Pikmin." This time there are no Captains on the field – you had direct control of the Pikmin, who would move one step at a time in response to your directional inputs. The puzzle? *Every* Pikmin on the screen would move every time you pushed up, down, left or right – so you had to march them all safely to the end goal by carefully avoiding obstacles, crashing some Pikmin into walls or corners intentionally to skip their movement while others made progress, and so on. It ended up being pretty brainteasingly brilliant!

Finally there was Tsunagete Pikmin, also known as "Connecting Pikmin." Once again the goal was getting Pikmin safely to an end goal, but you no longer had direct walking control – instead, you controlled a cursor that could highlight two tiles at a time and then swap their positions. It was a road-building challenge! You had to make a safe path for each Pikmin, avoiding both stationary obstacles and moving enemies along the way. And, to make things more complicated, every tile could only ever be swapped once – after a single move from its starting position, it would lock itself down and turn grey.

These three puzzling Pikmin minigames would have been a fun bonus to play alongside Pikmin 2 back in 2004, but Nintendo of America stopped supporting the e-Reader accessory before Japan did, so the cards never came across the Pacific. I can understand that, but I wish Nintendo would've revisited these games at some point in the last 19 years! They'd be perfect as a three-in-one eShop release! **– LUCAS**





# WARP ZONE

## What Nintendo Power was writing about way back when.

**IN JULY 1998,** everyone could smell what Nintendo Power was cookin' in Issue #110. Headlining the show was a cover featuring "Stone Cold" Steve Austin opening up a can of whoop-*** on The Undertaker, which could only mean one thing: WWF (now known as WWE): War Zone was finally arriving on the Nintendo 64. Oh **** yeah!

The midcard had a pretty solid showing, too, with titles such as Banjo-Kazooie, Mortal Kombat 4, Mission: Impossible, Bust-a-Move 2, Chopper Attack and Mike Piazza's Strike Zone all ready to just bring it. Even that jabroni, Quest 64, decided to show its face! All Star Baseball '99 and Harvest Moon for Game Boy were also on the tour, with the latter sharing poster space with Buck Bumble.

If you're not down with that, then Nintendo Power's got two words for ya: ten years! This issue also marked the 10th anniversary of when Nintendo Power first hit the scene, all the way back in 1988. To celebrate the occasion, they had a four-page feature that acted as a timeline of Nintendo releases and happenings from the point of the magazine's launch. "Here we've been playing games while nations have fallen, the World Wide Web was born, a sheep was cloned."

There was also a sprinkling of information on world events that didn't involve video games (as much), and even a mention of when the Super Mario Bros. movie – no, not that one, the original – came out!

As part of the celebration, the 10 grand prize winners of this issue's Player's Poll contest were to receive 10 games from 10 Nintendo Power magazine covers. The sky seemed to be the limit, as while most covers were from the Nintendo 64 era, some went as far back as Super Mario Bros. 3 on the NES and Metroid II: Return of Samus on the Game Boy!

Wrapping things up, Pak Watch recapped E3 and the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences award show, where Nintendo and Rare came away with a number of trophies for their mantle, including taking seven of the 12 awards the Nintendo 64 competed in, versus the PlayStation's two awards.

Though the 10th anniversary was done, Nintendo Power still had a big blowout in the August 1998 issue, as Bomberman Hero exploded onto the cover of Issue #111. Other ways to have a blast included Kobe Bryant in NBA Courtside, GT64 Championship Edition, International Superstar Soccer '98, F-1 World Grand Prix, Gex 64: Enter the Gecko and Waialae Country Club: True Golf Classics, which shared poster space with some upcoming Game Boy title called "Pokey Man"? What, did the cactus from Super Mario Bros. 2 decide to become a superhero? Speaking of Game Boy, WWF War Zone was on hand to work a dark match to warm up the crowd.

Other bombastic features included an exclusive preview of Turok 2, the launch of Nintendo Power Source at Nintendo.com (along with a bevy of other URLs, some now defunct, others redirecting to Nintendo's main website), and an exclusive interview with Shigeru Miyamoto called "The Legend of Miyamoto," complete with another preview of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

This month's Player's Poll was certainly not a dud for avid arcade collectors, as the grand prize was a rare, unreleased arcade test unit of Bio F.R.E.A.K.S. from Midway. And as the fuse ticked down on this issue, Pak Watch brought news of Ogre Battle 3, Space Station Silicon Valley, Fighting Force and Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA.

Finally, shipping alongside this issue was the first issue of Pokémon Power, a small NP spin-off made to add extra fuel to that franchise's fire. We'll take a closer look at that next time! **— DAVID**

ISSUE #110: **JULY 1998**

ISSUE #111: **AUGUST 1998**

BY JORDAN HAMILTON

# INTERVIEW

### DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH
January 23, 1958 in Pittsburgh, Steel Town, Pennsylvania

### FAVORITE FOOD
Always changing. Today it was the chicken at Raising Cane's. Love, love, sushi. Love. Italian food, love. Big burger. Love brats in the beer garden. I'll eat anything.

### LITTLE-KNOWN FACT
Hopefully there's a lot that's little known about me still! Maybe I'll just say again that I'm left-handed . . . and also right-handed. I'm semi-ambidextrous, which is a cool thing. Not by anything that I can take credit for. But my Dad was left-handed, and I was born right-dominant. And he wanted me to be left-handed. So he forced me as a toddler and as a child to always write with my left hand. So I write with my left hand, but I bat and kick dominant with my right hand/right foot. But playing soccer and lacrosse, etc., I found out that I am semi-ambidextrous just because of the fact that I've used my left hand for writing so much.

### CURRENT POSITION IN THE INDUSTRY
Retired. Woo-hoo!

### BEST KNOWN FOR
Working with Nintendo in the '80s

# HOWARD PHILLIPS

## A conversation with Nintendo's original Gamemaster and Nintendo Power legend!

INTERVIEW BY MATTHEW TARANTO

**NF'S own Matthew Taranto recently co-authored a book along with Howard Phillips, Nintendo's Gamemaster who become the public face of NOA and Nintendo Power magazine in the '80s. With work on the book completed, the two of them sat down for this exclusive conversation conducted just for this NF issue! Read on and enjoy these brand-new insights from a true NP legend!**

**MATTHEW: You evaluated hundreds of games while at Nintendo, even assigning them ratings out of 40 in the latter part of the decade. Were there any games that the public's critical or commercial reception differed strongly from your own?**
**HOWARD:** You know, it's hard to tell because sometimes sales were the only way that I would end up knowing what the masses really thought about a game.

I would say – and you would argue with me about this one – but I thought that Dragon Warrior/Dragon Quest 1 was really behind the times when it first released. You know, three years later, after the Japanese Famicom release, it released in the U.S. Mr. Arakawa wanted to release it then, and I thought it was just really dated. And also because it was not that pleasing graphically. So it wasn't very catnip-y to kind of motivate you to keep playing deeper. I don't think it was a really great entry into RPGs for the U.S. market, for U.S. players. Games like Final Fantasy I think did a lot better job of that, because they were, you know, more . . .

**They were a couple of years later though.**

Yeah, but my point is that to introduce RPGs in earnest to the console gamer – not PC gamers, but console gamers – I think you needed something that stood up better on graphics and things of that nature.

**Did Dragon Warrior do well in terms of sales?**

Oh, no, no, no. Arakawa ordered a million, and then we ended up giving them away.

**So that'd be where you would disagree with how Nintendo of America handled it?**

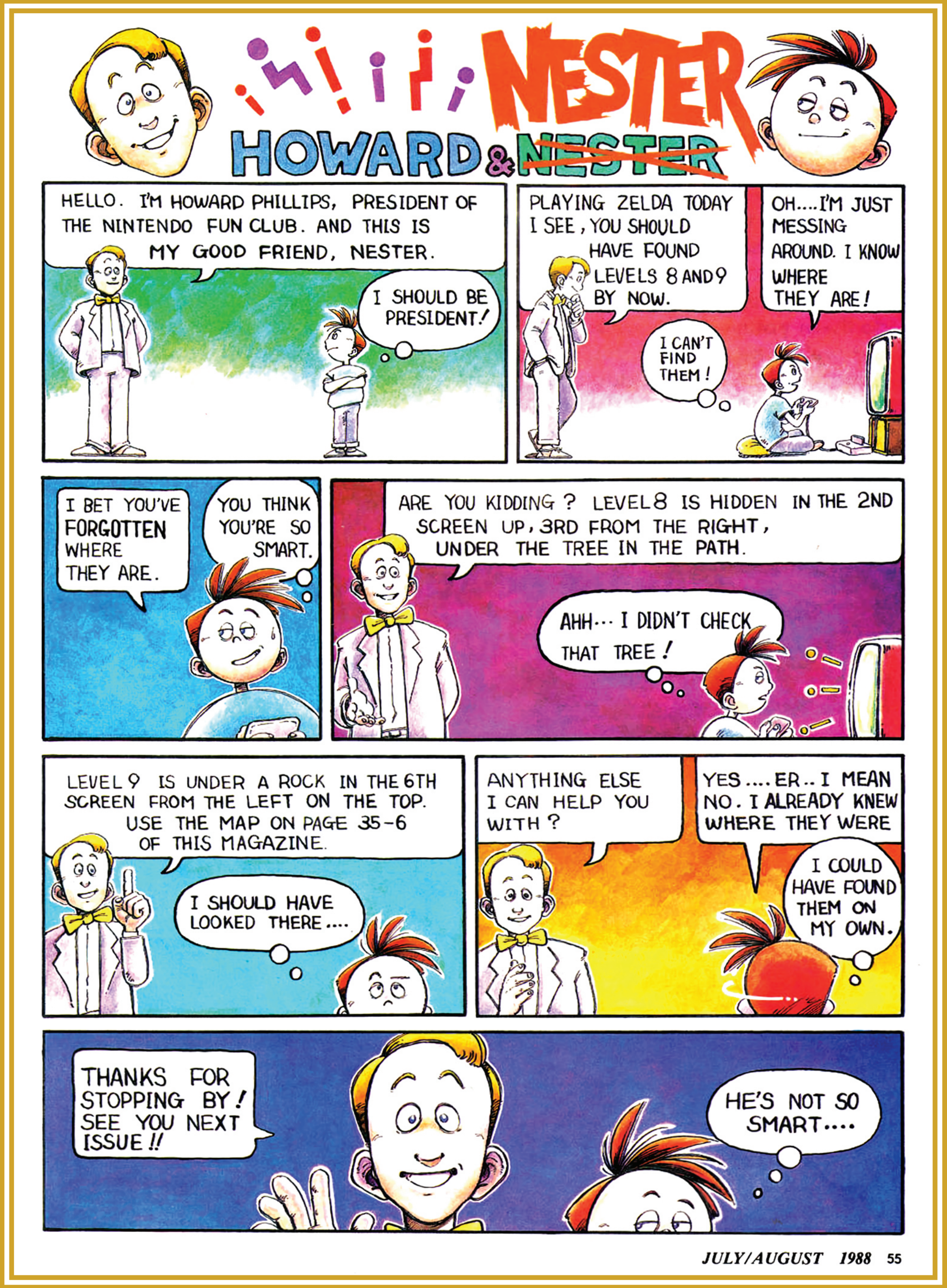
But I'm talking about players as well. I think some players . . . I mean, when I read about retro players today, I realize for some players, it's their favorite game. But the truth is, you know, many players have just any game as their favorite game, right? Everybody, you know, adopts whatever works for them and we're all different. But mainstream gamers, I think, it's hard to tell if they really liked it as much as Mr. Arakawa thought they would. I did not. And I told him so repeatedly.

**All right. Do you have a favorite video game series, and/or a favorite R&D team at NCL?**

Hard to say. You know, the R&D teams there have been historically pretty fluid, with people moving between teams. I mean, the leaders within the teams will be the same. But the people doing a lot of the work . . . any game is not just a product of the individual, the Miyamoto or the, you know, whoever was the leader of it. It's a combination of them, plus all the other people on the team. And there are some very talented people who have worked on a lot of Nintendo games. I guess if I were to look back on it, I would say I think that probably Metroid was the game that I had the most affinity for, and the team that made that, with Mr. Sakamoto.

**Do you still play video games?**

Not nearly as much as I used to. And keep in mind that I have played a




## HOWARD & NESTER'S 35TH ANNIVERSARY!

It was exactly 35 years ago when the first-ever issue of Nintendo Power magazine was completed and shipped to the mailboxes of eager young NES fans around America – making it also 35 years since those fans were introduced to Howard Phillips' famous comic strip, Howard & Nester! In every issue of Nintendo Power's first few years, the cocky young game player Nester would get himself stuck in some kind of video game dilemma, getting in over his head due to his extremely misplaced self-confidence. Then the actually knowledgeable bow-tie-wearing Howard would swoop in to save the day, redirecting Nester's misguided efforts with real strategy tips and secrets! Howard & Nester was an iconic comic that absolutely defined Nintendo Power's earliest era!

whole lot of games in my lifetime — many, many, many hours in my lifetime. And there are times for gameplay and times for other things. And right now, I'm not playing nearly as much as I used to play.

**Did you have a fascination with video games in the '70s? Or did they only begin to interest you once you started at Nintendo of America?**

I had a passing interest in them. My Dad had brought home a Magnavox Odyssey game, which was cool at the time because you could actually control something on the screen. Up until that point, the fact that television was no longer black and white, but in color, was a particularly cool thing in my youth. And then Odyssey came along and suddenly you could control things on the screen, which was like, super amazing science fiction technology! But it was pretty limited. It was really just Pong-type activities, and that didn't hold my interest very long. And so I kind of forgot all about it.

Then when I was in college, down at pizza places, etc., they had amusement halls and they had video arcade games. And so I started playing arcade games. I enjoyed the early shooters — the Galaxians and the Defenders, and Asteroids. Games like that I thought were terrific. Not so much a Space Invaders fan. (My attention span isn't a great match for its pacing.) You have to wait. You have to wait behind the block — you know, the bunkers — for them to come before you step out and take your shot at them. And that was just a little frustrating to me, since I like more flowy play. But yeah, I started playing arcades, I guess, in the late '70s, before I started at Nintendo in '81.

**What was it like working for Mr. Minoru Arakawa?**

Mr. Arakawa was a really wonderful guy. A special individual — especially at that time in the industry and in business. In hindsight, I think that was very true. But I had heard from some of the other Japanese transplants to Nintendo of America from NCL (that's Nintendo in Japan), that Americans were more like cowboys. You know, we were just running or riding into town, shooting off our guns, making a lot of noise, and then riding off. Making quick decisions. Not being very thoughtful and/or methodical about things.

**That was their perception, huh?**

That was their perception. Well, Mr. Arakawa really impressed me with with his ability to just be calm and methodical and ask insightful questions — and never make a decision before it needed to be made. So things like bringing out the Famicom as the NES in the United States . . . as soon as I played the Famicom, I wanted it to come to the U.S. "This is so awesome! We have to do this in the United States today!" And Mr. Arakawa would say, "Hmm, do you think so?" You know? And I'd go, "Yeah! We gotta have it! We gotta have it!" Bang, bang, bang. Cowboy, cowboy. And he said, "Hmm. Hmm." And he, over the next two years, spent time really figuring out what was necessary to give Nintendo the greatest chance of having success with the Famicom/NES in the United States. And we were successful! And I think I attribute a fair amount of that success to the fact that Mr. Arakawa is a very thoughtful and kind of mature businessman — meaning that he doesn't make quick decisions or rash decisions. But he does listen to people, and he made a lot of smart decisions during my time working with him.

And also he's a nice guy.

**Sounds like a really "ounce of prevention is a pound of cure" kind of thing, where you took your time, but you were able to focus on like, "OK, what's the best way to sell this?" You had R.O.B., but to focus on the "entertainment system" angle in the first place . . .**

Yeah, but, you know, having worked at a quite a few game companies, there's a kind of pace of action like "We've got to do this!" or "What are we going to do?" and "How are we going to do this?" and then "We're going to do that." And there's all of this piling on of all of these things — this juggling of ideas that you want to try. And you want to deal with it all to give yourself the best opportunity for success.

**Yeah.**

Mr. Arakawa, on the other hand, would say, "Hmm," when he's thinking, "Will the retailers buy it?" You know, at that time, they were scared. A lot of them had lost their jobs because of the Atari 2600 debacle, where too many games were shipped and they were stuck with a whole bunch of inventory — and that meant that a whole bunch of companies lost a lot of money because of that. And so Mr. Arakawa was thinking, "How are we going to solve that problem?" And in the end analysis, they came up with a two-pronged approach.

One was that we're going to go kind of slow to start with, and we're going to prove that they sell through. So that fear of them not selling through would be allayed by actual proof in the marketplace. Then the other thing is he did price protection, which was huge. Nobody price-protected in the toy industry. And back then it was the toy industry — not electronics, because electronics didn't really exist. And so he said, "We'll sell you these things. If they don't sell, we'll buy them back from you in three months" or something like that. And those two things solved the problem of how to get retailers' support rather than, you know, running around the office, hair on fire. What sort of marketing department thing are we going to do? What materials? How are we going to have retailer events and all that? He simplified it all down to just a couple key points and made it quite doable.

**Well, OK. And I guess the results speak for themselves.**

Yeah. It's easy in hindsight to say "everything that happened after this was because of these things," but in reality, it's always messy and complicated. But fundamentally, I think that that Mr. Arakawa's ability to settle on identifying what were the key barriers to being successful and to just slowly and methodically address those, understand those, and then figure out how to address those in a way that was commercially viable, was why we were successful.

**What would you say made the NES and the Famicom so special among other video game systems at the time?**

Focus on games.

**That's a big one.**

Nintendo, when I joined, was fundamentally a product company. It wasn't a marketing company. And so to that end, it was asking questions like "what do consumers/what do players like to play?" "What arcade games do they like to play?" "Which toys do kids like to play with?" You know, what is Gunpei Yokoi thinking in terms of what it is that kids want to do? Not "How are we going to market it?" It's knowing what they want to do. Because if we can make something that they want to do, then the marketing will just be an accelerant. It won't be a way to have to make your success. It will just accelerate your success.

And when it came to the games, it was the same. Nintendo — at first, with the arcade games — wasn't making anything that was particularly interesting in the game space. They made games like Monkey Magic and a bunch of others that were really derivative. Several versions of Breakout (which every company was copying). Every other company either had Breakout clones or shooter clones or Pong clones. And Nintendo was doing the same.

And then they lucked out into a situation where a shooter that they spent a ton of money on, well, failed. Mr. Masayuki Uemura had pitched Mr. Yamauchi on doing the best-of-breed shooter by having a very expensive PC board to generate some extra cool visual effects that he thought were going to make this shooter sell more than any other shooter to date. And that was Radar Scope. And it didn't sell.

It was OK. But there are some wonky things about it. And also people were starting to lose their enthusiasm for the shooters — or at least the mainstream people were looking for something a little different. And in that context, Mr. Yamauchi gave Mr. Miyamoto a shot at making a game that was novel and different, but ultimately had to appeal to players. I mean, that was the focus. It wasn't just something like "we're going to be able to market our way out of this." It was something that had to appeal to kids. And so that was somewhat novel, because of the fact that, up to that point, much of the arcade game design and direction had come out of the engineering side of things, because it took pretty heady engineering to make an arcade game. And so the engineers themselves were kind of controlling the entire process and the end result.

Well, Miyamoto, coming from the art side, approached it from "What's appealing to people?" "What's good commercial art?" "What do people like and what do they respond to?" And out of that was born first Donkey Kong and then, you know, a slew of other games — like, eventually, Super Mario Bros. And then, of course, Zelda. He didn't have much to do with Metroid, but he was in the building! But I think that emphasis on players is really what led to the success of Nintendo versus the other companies that were really trying to sell consoles.

Like, when Sega came out with Sonic, they weren't trying to sell Sonic so much as they were trying to sell consoles, and they wanted a console-selling game. So it was almost like "We need a game for the marketing department." It's not like "We need a game that players will love." And, you know, they got both! But my point is that one of the reasons that Nintendo's successful is that constant focus on players, and making players have great games that they enjoyed.

**With Nintendo Power's early development, you ended up taking several trips to Japan, visiting the offices of the staff who were putting**

## THE REAL HOWARD PHILLIPS

Nintendo Power didn't just feature Howard as a comic strip character – he also appeared multiple times throughout the magazine's first few years' worth of issues as his authentic smiling self! Howard did everything from promoting contests to modeling merchandise, explaining the right technique for photographing a high score on an '80s CRT TV and writing a final note to readers at the end of each issue. He was Nintendo of America's original Renaissance man!

**putting the magazine together there. So what was that like?**

It was more than several trips! For a couple of years I was going once a month, and spending two weekends with a week in between. It was a whirlwind, and really a lot of fun.

The production company there was called Work House, and it was small – like a dozen people. And they would do all of the original pulling together of what each particular issue would look like.

Gail Tilden and I would have editorial discussions. Gail was wonderful as the publisher and editor-in-chief, because she just has great sensibilities and is very proficient as a manager and as somebody to work with. She follows through with everything that she says she's going to do, and doesn't let things slip by.

I was responsible for all the game-specific content, to make sure that it was accurate and true. And then I also tended to things that players cared about. And it was interesting, because at the time within Nintendo, literally nobody had much of a clue at all about what gamers liked in games. And it was because gaming was so new in the United States, and that it was a young person's sport. At the time I was in my early 20s, and so anybody older than 20 – all the people in the suits in the front office – had no idea what video games were. It was like what asking your parents about ChatGPT would feel like today. They'd just say "ahh, whatever." So they didn't really understand gaming, and I was the only one who had spent a lot of time really focused on it while I was at Nintendo during my first couple of years there.

And so when it came to making sure that our magazine wasn't a marketing piece – well, wasn't *just* a marketing piece – we had to focus on what players cared about. It wasn't a marketing piece first and foremost, but it was a player information vehicle. And that was a combination of both things they cared about historically. So you knew "Oh, these things are important to players." And then when new games would come out, somebody, me usually, had to make an assessment of whether or not this particular game would be of interest to players. And what about it they would find interesting. And my role was to try to provide that editorial direction, so that those things made it into the magazine and in front of the players. So they'd say, "Oh, it's cool. It's got this." As opposed to talking about, you know, superfluous marketing stuff that nobody cared about.

**So I know this next question has a longer answer that we go into detail in the book about, but what's the short answer for why you decided to end up leaving Nintendo?**

I'd been there 10 years. Ten years is a long time anywhere – at least I think it is, except in partnerships and marriages, things like that, where at 10 years you're still just getting started.

I outgrew Nintendo. Or Nintendo outgrew me, or changed. I really enjoyed the small entrepreneurial atmosphere of being one of the first five people there when I started – and it had grown to over 1,200 by the time I left. So I didn't know everybody in the building anymore.

When we had a project in the first couple of years, if there was anything that was going on, then it involved all of us. Mr. Arakawa, Don James, the service people, Gail Tilden. Everybody chipped in and would work the weekends together to get that thing, whatever it was, taken care of and done. Whereas years later, we grew to a point where suddenly there was a division of responsibilities and workloads between different groups. And you didn't find all the customer service people going over and helping out the marketing people or vice versa, that sort of thing.

I had done a lot of work initially in operations, with shipping and stuff, but I was also doing my job of informing Nintendo Japan and Mr. Arakawa with regards to the game market in the U.S. – telling them what was working and what wasn't, based on my conversations with players. Whether I was running our arcade test route and talking to players there, or eventually going out and doing things like mall demonstrations for kids, I was always talking to the real players. But then eventually that became doing demonstrations for the media to show them new products, and they'd say, "Well, what the heck is this robot thing and why do people want it?" And I said, "Well, because it's cool." I kind of winced a little bit when he would move slow and make the grinding noise. But still, when asked why people would want this thing, I'd say, "Because it's cool. It's a robot. And look, he actually does look at the screen! Put your hand in front of his eyes and he can't work." I was fascinated by the technology, and I think a number of kids were too. Gameplay-wise, none of the players thought it was particularly great. But but it was still cool technology. So I spoke to that.

But then we became – we meaning Nintendo, and it was still a "we" for me – became very much a marketing organization, and the number of titles that were coming out of Japan was decreasing. We weren't getting a lot of great games. Miyamoto was spread very thin. I had been lobbying for Mr. Arakawa to give me some opportunity to participate more and help with the effort to grow the development organization on the product side. And it just didn't materialize until I was one foot out the door. And then there were some offers. But if somebody thinks you're capable of helping, or if somebody agrees with you, then they're going to step in. They're going to step forward with that. If they drag their feet until you're one foot out the door, then really they don't want you to do that. They just want you to stay to keep doing the other stuff. And they wanted me to stay to be the name and face of Nintendo and do the "Tour-de-Fun"-type goofy marketing tours. And I just didn't want to do that.

**Nintendo Power readers from that time all remember when you left – they had one final Howard & Nester, which just so happened to be based on The Lone Ranger. So they gave you a moment of riding off into the sunset. But the reason why you were leaving was never explained back then, so it's nice to get a full answer after all these years.**

The bottom line is yes, I worked there. And early on I could have said it was my Nintendo of America. My – and I shared that with Mr. Arakawa and a dozen or a hundred other people during the early years – but it was our effort. But as it grew bigger, it no longer became mine. And those who owned it and controlled it wanted to move in a different direction. And that different direction was based on growing it to a point where it became much more about marketing and extending the distribution reach of the company, and ensuring that the product flow was there, as opposed to focusing on staying on top of the product game and making cool and different and attractive and fun gameplay.

And you can look back and say, "Well, they did this game and this game and Super Mario World and on and on and on." But the bottom line is, for a company of its size, there wasn't a whole lot of money going into development of new products. Including – which is so common these days with second-party development – funding labs to develop things. Those efforts didn't come until later. And by then I think it was too late, because they just didn't have the output they were looking for.

**You worked at many places after your Gamemaster years, such as LucasArts, THQ and Microsoft. What was your favorite job in the game**

**industry? (And if it was Nintendo, then besides Nintendo.)**

My favorite, besides Nintendo . . . I liked working at Microsoft. Especially because it was initially a PC game company, and I was working in the PC game division as it transitioned into a console game division. That was interesting and fun because I felt like I had a big value add to the organization. Also it was really fun to see people translate their talents and skills into the games – into the console space, into the mainstream space – which at the time was really the difference between PC gaming and console gaming, since PC gaming was very niche in the mid-'90s.

I mean those who played PC games will say no, it wasn't, but yes, it was. I'm sorry. You and your three other buddies were the only people who were playing PC games back then. The majority of players were playing on consoles and, yes, a lot of them might have been younger.

Also a lot of them who were maybe 12 years old when they started playing in '85, by '95, they were 22. So there were certainly a lot of adults who were still playing consoles as opposed to PC games and watching Microsoft and helping Microsoft. And in whatever small way that I could, helping the company to up its game into the console space was pretty rewarding.

**This was around the launch of the original Xbox, right?**

Yeah. So originally I started in '96, and the original Xbox, what was it, 2001? Yeah. So that launch was right at mid-stream for me, since I was at Microsoft for 10 years as well.

**I wasn't actually aware you were there for a whole decade!**

Time flies when you're making games.

**Do people still recognize you in public?**

Yes. They do. But it's weird: For whatever reason I don't get recognized as being Howard Phillips. I get recognized as being Robin Williams, which, I mean, he's dead, number one. And number two, I don't look anything like Robin Williams, if you ask me. But yeah, it was interesting because at the peak of my "public face" career at Nintendo, they did Q Score for market research. And at the time like 59% of boys between the ages of 9 and 11 would recognize my name or face, which put me ahead of Arnold Schwarzenegger and, you know, and a couple other famous characters. And it wasn't because of me! It was because Nintendo was so pervasive and Nintendo Power was so pervasive that, you know, oh, yeah, he's that guy.

**Is that kind of surreal? Like kids would come up to you and ask you stuff?**

Yeah. You know, you'd be pumping gas or you'd be in the mall or in an airport or something and people would like, stop and shudder and "Ooh, ooh. It's him. It's you! It's, it's!" And it's fun! But it's also that it can be a little bit . . . you know, when you're on a schedule and you're trying to get somewhere, you're late for your plane and there's some little kid saying, "Can I ask you a question?" You're like, "My plane leaves in 20 minutes!"

**He needs help finding Dungeon 7, Howard!**

Yeah! It was so, so fun to deliver the connection with kids in that situation. But it could be draining at times.

**Well, we're almost at the end. I'd like you to tell us a little about your new book.**

Oh, well. So I have been keeping up with what's being written now that games have really, truly come of age. And it's been what, how long now? You know, 40 years since they really kind of kicked in. There are books being written. There are miniseries being done. There are documentaries, podcasts, magazines, etc. And, to me, it's really fun. It's great to relive all of those past things that were so awesome about gaming in the early days. And I wanted to contribute to that by sharing my own personal experiences.

So I set about writing a book. And then my wife said, "Well, you know, you're not a good writer. And I don't like listening to you talk too much." So she suggested that I do a graphic-based book. And I thought that seemed reasonable. So I set about finding the perfect partner. And I got better than the perfect partner! And in you, Matthew, there's somebody who's not only extremely talented from an art standpoint, but also is a big enthusiast for gaming – and then also has a perspective that adds to the storytelling! You can speak from your own childhood – of what it was like, not working within the industry at that time, but as a player at that time. And so I set about writing a book that would be entertaining for players to read, harkening back to the days of maybe their youth, of when they played games and evoke special memories that they had as kids, but also sharing stories and information that they hadn't heard about, and that really hasn't been in the public venue before.

And also there was really one thing that was very important to me to convey in the book: Having worked in the game industry for so many years, frequently successes or failures are attributed to an individual. But making a video game takes a whole lot of effort by a whole lot of people, and credit is never spread as broadly as it should be. And so I wanted within the book to give as much credit as possible to those who actually did some interesting and important work who are maybe not some of the top names that you've heard of.

At the same time, I also wanted it to be accurate as possible. It's not easy to write a big book and have everything be true and accurate! I had my own firsthand knowledge. I also know when things ring true or not, or I can sniff out when things are inaccurate or just flat-out false. And so my intention was to make sure that it was as close to true and accurate as possible as a retelling of what it was like to be at Nintendo from '81 to '91.

**And we close with a common question for every Interview section guest in Nintendo Force: If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?**

Well, I'm an action gamer. So based on that, I think I'd like to have a B Button.

**B Button?**

I could do my B Button run! Right? With anything – just to give that boost to anything and everything. To be able to run faster, jump higher, all of those things.

It's funny – when I was a kid, there was a shoe company called Red Ball, and they had Red Ball Jets that let you run faster and jump higher. That was their marketing tagline. So we all – and this is in elementary school – we all wanted Red Ball Jets because we wanted to be able to run faster and jump higher.

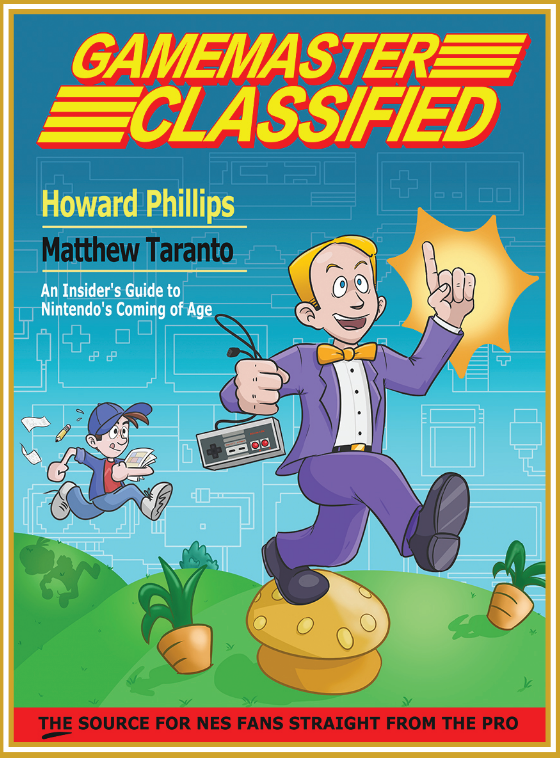
If I could have a superpower, it would definitely be the B Button.

**B Button! That is the most Howard Phillips response yet.**

**Well, thank you very much, Howard. It's been a real pleasure to interview you and to know you and to work with you. So I appreciate it. I hope everything goes well for you in your next great adventure.**

Well thanks! Thanks.

**Thank you for the interview.**

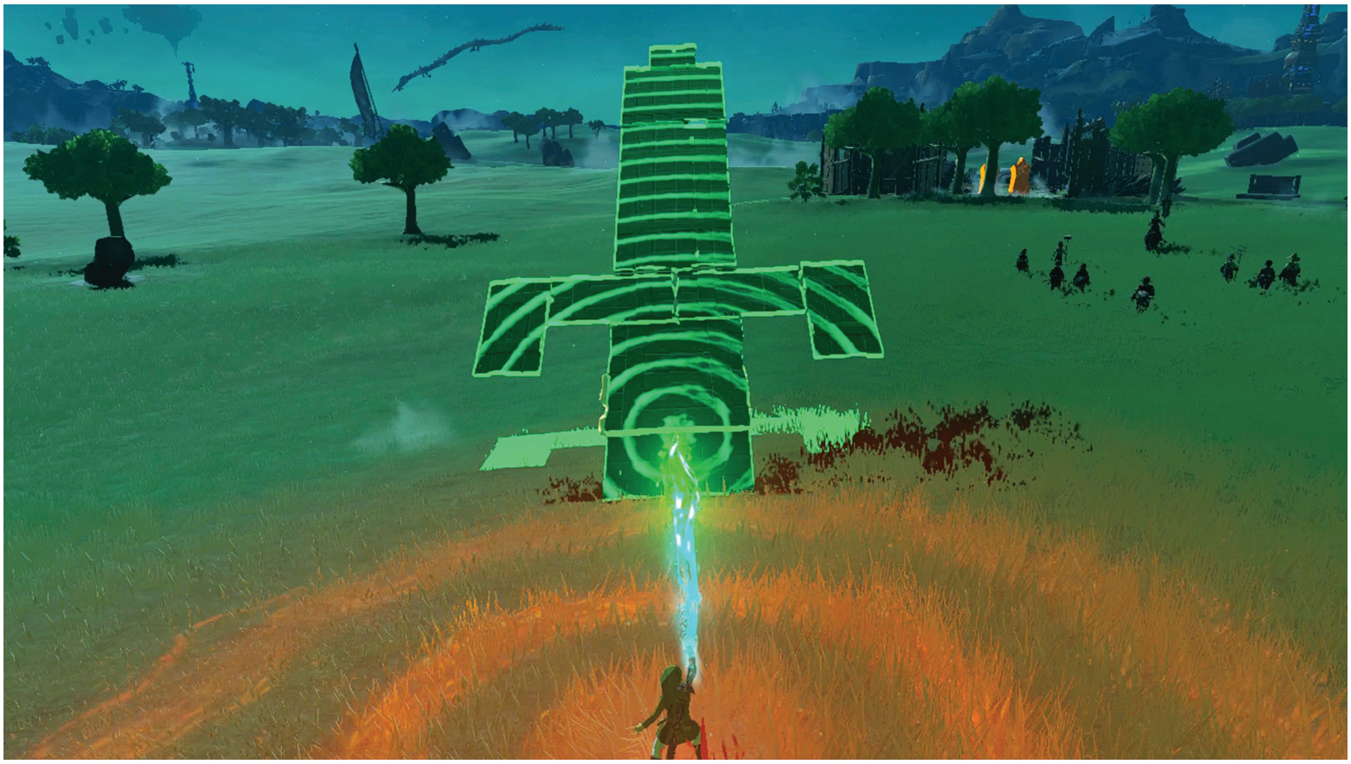



READ GAMEMASTER CLASSIFIED!

Get the inside scoop on what really went on within the walls of Nintendo of America in the '80s! Howard and Matthew's jointly created book is now available at **gamemasterclassified.backerkit.com**.

# REVIEWS

The Demon King has been revived once again, and we've been hard at work trying to send him back to the pit he crawled out of . . . when we aren't being distracted by the crazy variety of new things to do in the familiar-yet-different open world of Hyrule! Turn the page to read our full review of the all-new The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom. Or just hang around right here and stare at this page a little while longer. If you want to. Do whatever you want! It's your magazine! No judgment here!



# It's Dangerous to Go Alone. Build This!

## THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TEARS OF THE KINGDOM

**MY LATEST QUEST** to save the kingdom of Hyrule began by building the world's ugliest bridge.

It was truly a sight to behold. Logs akimbo, glued to one another at the wildest and most impractical angles. Barrels and boxes attached for no worthwhile reason. A boat – a fully seaworthy sailing craft – stuck on one of the ends, just to make the entire abomination all the more insane.

My kids were rolling with laughter, loving every minute of it. And our time together in Hyrule was just starting!

As with several past adventures on the Switch, The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom has been enjoyed in the Thomas home as one part heroic quest and one part children's entertainment. My sons, now ages 11, 9, 5, 4 and less than 1, have sat as spectators to take in Daddy's journey across this revamped open world originally seen in Breath of the Wild – and it's been a true joy. They didn't watch too much back when Breath of the Wild itself first came out (three of them weren't even born yet!), so my memories of that game will remain rooted in the feeling of immersion I experienced in exploring its world as a solo player. But with this sequel? I'll never forget the fun we've all had together, playing as a group for the past month, staying up way past normal bedtime to see just one more thing. To clear just one more shrine. To reunite just one more Korok with their friend!

When the original Old Man in this series told Link it was dangerous to go alone, maybe he meant playing would be more fun while surrounded by a couch full of kids.

. . . All right, enough sappy Dad stuff! (That's what I get for writing this right after Father's Day.) Everyone wants to know how Tears of the Kingdom stacks up as a sequel in the legendary Zelda series! So let's give it a proper evaluation, shall we?

### THE POWER OF ULTRAHAND

I've already started talking about the building mechanics introduced in this sequel, so let's begin the review with those: They're spectacular. Truly! I know not everyone was excited to see Nintendo take a page out of Rare's old playbook for Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts, and pretty much the only negativity I've seen directed toward this game online in the month since its launch has come from players who are against the idea of having to build even the simplest of structures. But I've had a blast with all of the construction components included here. (And if you don't like them, you can still enjoy 99% of the game. There are few building puzzles that require anything more elaborate than two or three things to be attached to each other.)

Ultrahand has much more flexibility than I thought it would. When Mr. Aonuma demonstrated this mechanic in his pre-release gameplay video, he built only a very simple boat, with three logs precisely aligned with one another, and a pair of fans likewise placed perfectly perpendicularly on top. All other early examples Nintendo had shown off were similarly straightforward.

So I was surprised to find that the Ultrahand ability offers far more freedom of expression than that! You can attach natural objects like logs and boulders to each other at nearly any angle you choose. You'll discover dozens of different "Zonai devices" that power on and perform varied functions, from blasting out cannon shots to simply spraying water on the ground. You can mash about 21 things together before running into a limit for complexity, but that's more than generous, and social media has been filled with insane contraptions for the past month, with creators building everything from the Batmobile to fully functional Gundam mech suits. Crazy!

My only frustration with Ultrahand is that, because it offers so much free expression, it can be hard to build with exactitude – parts you're trying to line up at specific angles tend to want to attach to one another *just* a little bit off instead. (But I was still able to build myself one of those trusty viral airbikes made with two fans and a steering stick!)

### A SHORTER FUSE, PLEASE!

The other new gameplay mechanic centered on sticking things together is Fuse, used to increase the power of your weapons, the impact of your arrows and the utility of your shields. It's another good addition to the series – but its fun factor is failed a bit by the menu system. You can Fuse just about anything! Any item you can pick up off the ground can also be slapped onto the end of a sword or arrow. But, in practice, that means you have to navigate through a huge laundry list of possible items in moments like aiming a bow shot. You'll be falling through the air dramatically, pull out your bow, trigger the epic, cinematic slowdown effect while lining up your shot . . . and then you'll spend 5, 10, 15 or even 30 seconds scouring back and forth through your overflowing inventory of items to track down the one specific thing you want to Fuse to your arrow before letting it fly. It's flow-breaking.

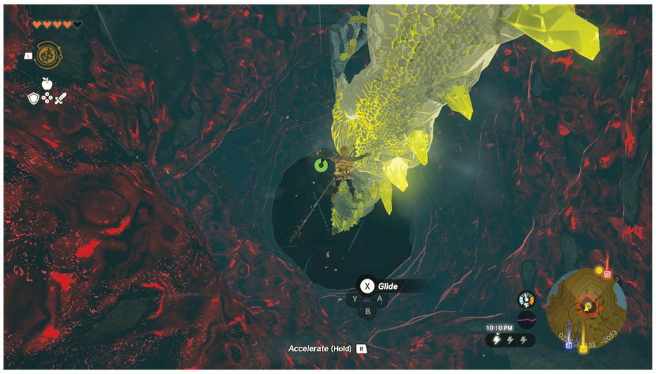
Again, Fuse itself is fine and fun. But the menu system that supports it could use another look.

Outside of battle the muddled menus can cause frustration too. One of the most common item combinations Nintendo encourages you to use is Flint + Wood. Toss one of each on the ground and strike them, and a campfire will spawn that lets you rest and advance the in-game clock. Great! Breath of the Wild was the same way. But the menu doesn't sort Flint next to Wood. You have to go spelunking through the whole list every time!

### A WORLD OF EXPLORATION

It feels nitpicky to complain about things like item menu organization in a review of such a grand, sweeping epic of a game like this. But I think the vast scale of Hyrule magnifies even the slightest of inconveniences. If this were a 10-hour game, then you might only encounter minor frustrations in it a handful of times. But this is more like a 100-hour game (or more!), so if something small is off in its design, it will end up feeling like a much bigger deal than is really is. So well done to Nintendo for making me love this world so much that I want to explore it for weeks on end, to the point where I'm getting frustrated by even the littlest issues!

Let's shift to discussing exploration then, shall we? In our last issue, we declared that a better name for this game might end up being "Tiers of the Kingdom" because of the way it layers two open worlds on top of each other. Turns out it's more like two and a half!



We're descending into spoilers now, so fair warning if you've read this far but somehow haven't played much of Tears of the Kingdom yourself yet!

Not wanting to get my hopes up about the extent of the alterations and additions to Breath of the Wild's reused open world, I was cautious in predicting that this sequel would have an extensive underground exploration component. I didn't let my expectations go too far, in case the brief looks at cave areas we'd seen in trailers were only a small part of the game! But no – Nintendo went all-in. We got ourselves a full third tier of the kingdom in the form of The Depths.

The Zelda series has had parallel "Dark Worlds" before, and Breath of the Wild's Hyrule has its own now, as The Zelda series has had parallel network of almost entirely unilluminated caverns stretching out underneath the full expanse of the surface world above. If you follow the main story path the game suggests, you get introduced to The Depths early on, as part of a tutorial quest. I'm glad I didn't do that, though. I just started exploring the surface on my own after leaving the opening Great Sky Island area, and after a few hours I saw one of Breath of the Wild's dragons flying down into a hole in the ground!

I jumped in after it and was amazed at what I saw. Or rather what I didn't see! The Depths are extremely dark, to the point where you need to light your own path through them with generous use of light-emitting Brightbloom Seeds. It's ominous. Tense. And a ton of fun! I just happened to choose a chasm entrance that led to an area overflowing with Gloom everywhere once I landed below, too, which reinforced the feeling that The Depths was a high-stakes area to explore.

Back up on the surface, tons more caves and caverns have appeared all over Hyrule, adding a great deal of fresh exploration opportunities across a world we first saw six years ago. I was once again pleasantly surprised at how far Nintendo went! Very few parts of the map felt too familiar. Change has happened everywhere, either from the disastrous effects of Demon King Ganondorf's Upheavel or the simple passage of time, as Hyrule's citizens have grown older and built up new areas following the events of Breath of the Wild.

I don't want to see every game world reused multiple times going forward, but I feel like it works well here. Every corner of the surface felt exciting to re-explore, and I'm happy they went this direction!

So the surface is one tier, and the Depths area is another . . . the Sky Islands I'm awarding half-tier status.

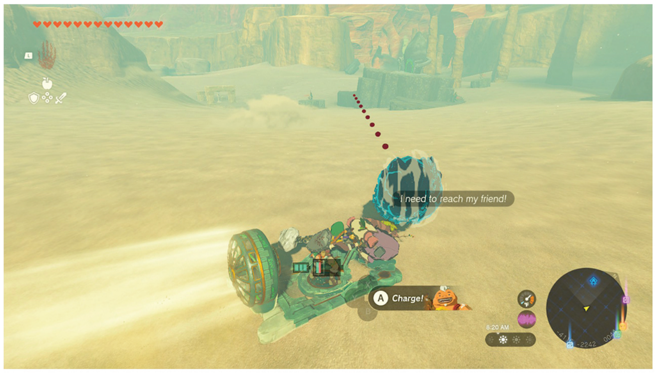
They're magical and mystical, and skydiving down from them to the land below is exciting, as is rising back up to them by riding on Recalled rocks or flying on an Ultrahand-assembled vehicle of some sort. But the Sky Islands don't have a ton of explorable area in the final evaluation of things. They're isolated archipelagos with a few things to see and do across each island chain. The Sky tier never feels like the main course, though. It's a side dish. You play around in the Sky Islands for a bit every few hours, then you head back down for the main meat of the game elsewhere.

## DUNGEONS & LIGHT DRAGONS

Breath of the Wild was hailed as a masterpiece by nearly everyone who played it, but one common complaint was that it didn't feature traditional Zelda series dungeons – roaming in the interiors of the Divine Beasts felt too limited. Tears of the Kingdom does a better job in this regard, with a set of Temples that feel a little more like the dungeon designs of the past.

In a deviation from the old formula of "find the new item and use it to beat the boss," you instead get one new ally character tagging along in each Temple, and they have a unique new gameplay mechanic you need to use to clear checkpoints and, yes, fight against the boss in the end. Dudebro Yunobo the Goron rolls up like a rock and jets himself forward like a rocket, which breaks barriers in the environment, rings gongs in the Fire Temple and smashes the legs of the Marbled Gohma boss at the end. Proud Zora warrior Sidon wraps Link in water to protect him from enemy filth, while also embuing your strikes with water to clear away toxins on the ground. Bird boy Tulin can generate powerful gusts of wind out of thin air – that power's used to turn turbines in the Wind Temple, and also helps you maneuver in the incredible aerial boss battle that caps off that dungeon run. (It's amazing. One of my new all-time favorite Zelda boss fights!)

I like the idea of giving Link allies to fight alongside him, but it does get a little cumbersome in the long run – ghostly avatars of each new Champion join your adventuring party after you clear each Temple, and they end up clogging the screen after a while. Only Tulin and Yunobo's abilities are really useful outside their own Temples, too – I never found myself using Sidon's water bubble power after earning it.



## AN EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

Tears of the Kingdom gripped my heart tighter than any past Zelda game ever has. I won't get spoilery here for fear of lessening the story's impact on anyone who hasn't fully experienced it yet, but I honestly felt moved by the characters and their journey all throughout this quest. Here's a whole kingdom full of people who already had to deal with the Great Calamity and the destruction that preceded Breath of the Wild, and just when they were getting their footing again and beginning to rebuild, the ground falls away underneath them once again.

And yet the game remains adventurous. Courageous! No one in Hyrule falls into a state of despair, even if a giant rock falls from the sky and crushes their home. They pick themselves up, dust themselves off and move forward, head held high.

The core story characters – the ones important enough to get voice acting in cutscenes from time to time – are all wonderful. But I enjoyed meeting back up with less-important Breath of the Wild NPCs even more! It's fun to see how time has changed characters like Hudson – you helped him strike out on his own as a construction worker in the previous game, as well as meet his bride and get married. Now he's President Hudson, in charge of a major company, and he has a 7-year-old daughter!

Again, I applaud the decision to reuse the same Hyrule from Breath of the Wild. Video game worlds are most often no more after the credits roll – the characters you met, the sights you saw, all things of the past. But this Hyrule now feels persistent. Ongoing. A living, breathing world where people really are making their way through the journey of their lives, and some crazy video game shenanigans just happen to happen around them from time to time.

## COMPULSION FOR COMPLETION

Carter, Calvin, Cooper, Colson, Chance and myself spent most of a month venturing across this land together. (Chance less so. He's just a baby, after all. Too much screen time wouldn't be good for him.) After so many staying-up-late nights, though, Mary kindly requested that we bring the adventure to an end so we could get back to a more normal bedtime routine in the home. We complied.

Even after fighting our way through the final battle (which is gloriously epic; no notes) and rolling the credits, Tears of the Kingdom still calls out to me, though. I never did achieve a 100% clear of Breath of the Wild – there are some Shrines I missed, and I certainly didn't come close to finding all 900 of the hidden Koroks. For Tears of the Kingdom, though, I feel compelled to keep playing until I complete it. I've almost found all of the Lightroots in The Depths; I have a few more Shrines of Light to clear. I want to get them all!

I think many if not most players will feel the same way. This is a game that you just don't want to end. And, thankfully, it's packed so full of content that even after finishing the main story, you can reasonably keep on playing for several more weeks – or even months – and still see something new every single time you sit down with it and turn the power on. This Hyrule is packed! It's overflowing!

## STILL OVER THE HORIZON

I wasn't sure how Nintendo would find a way to top their work in Breath of the Wild back when it came out, but I feel they have here – with years of more polish applied and refined exploration. Even something as simple as the Ascend ability – sending you straight upward, to pass through a surface above – adds so much more fun and so many more possibilities!

So again, I'm not sure where they'll go next. I assume we'll gets news of a DLC expansion at some point, and I'll happily accept whatever that will include. (More Addison locations?) But the really intriguing question to ask is "What's next for The Legend of Zelda, after Tears of the Kingdom?". We're now in the 3D open world, freedom-of-exploration era of this franchise, and I don't think they'd try using this same Hyrule a third time. So we'll probably get an all-new world next time!

Wherever we go, though, I'll make sure not to go alone. **– LUCAS**

**10**

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NINTENDO RATING: E10+

# Stuck in an Endless August

## LOOP8: SUMMER OF GODS

**IT'S BOTH UNFORTUNATE** and a bit ironic that Loop8: Summer of Gods, a game focused on time travel, makes me wish I could go back in time to the point before I started playing it.

This JRPG had the makings of a solid game with beautiful visuals, gameplay focused on building relationships and an engaging apocalyptic premise. You play as a young man named Nini in a world where monsters called Kegai have destroyed most of Earth. Nini moves to one of the planet's last safe havens and discovers he can travel back in time: He can relive the month of August over and over until he successfully saves the town from the Kegai.

Unfortunately, the execution of these concepts ranged from good to downright awful.

The game's setting of Ashihara, a rural Japanese town, dazzles on the screen. It's not a large area, but it doesn't need to be. Each locale is crafted with detail and bright colors, from the sparkling waters of the beach to the long, winding mountain road up to Nini's home.

Loop8's cast is also a high point, and it should be, considering the game bases everything on character relationships. To find out the lore of this world and fight successfully in battles, you need to build up these bonds.

Thankfully, this is mostly fun! Your bonds grow via conversations, where you can select options like "compliment" and "tell it like it is." In turn, the characters' friendship, affection and/or hate levels will increase or decrease toward you.

Once those levels reach certain thresholds, you'll unlock special dialogue and scenes. I enjoyed getting to know most of the characters, including Saru, a baseball-loving and dependable guy who becomes Nini's bestie, and Max, a teacher who looks out for Nini due to their shared traumatic experiences. To me, these moments outshined everything else Loop8 had to offer.

It's too bad many of the mechanics involving the cast didn't work well due to how random they were. Loop8 uses an AI system to control the characters, so they can have different moods and appear in different locations. However, sometimes I would check the map, locate a character, and they wouldn't be at the place they were listed at.

Since time is always passing in-game due to its calendar system, it quickly became frustrating.

In combat, you control Nini and can choose two allies to bring along . . . but their actions are randomized in battle. I can't tell you how many times I could've beaten a boss faster if the party members used an attack – any attack! – rather than a buff.

Also, Loop8's performance on Switch had issues. While the game looked good, I encountered loading screens constantly. Sometimes loading would occur in the middle of character scenes and feel quite jarring.

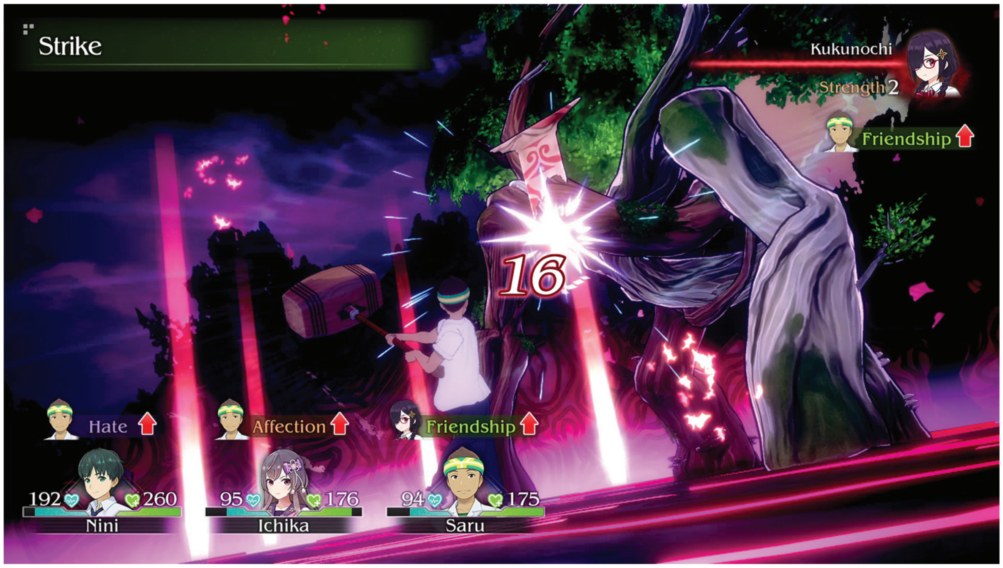
If these were only the only issues I had with Loop8, I'd still look back on my time spent somewhat positively; however, the game's endings removed all possibility for that. Throughout Loop8, the mysteries about the Kegai slowly unfold. It leads to interesting revelations, but the game's endings – yes, all three of them – take that development and zap all the meaning out of it. It doesn't matter which one you pick. There's no satisfying payoff.

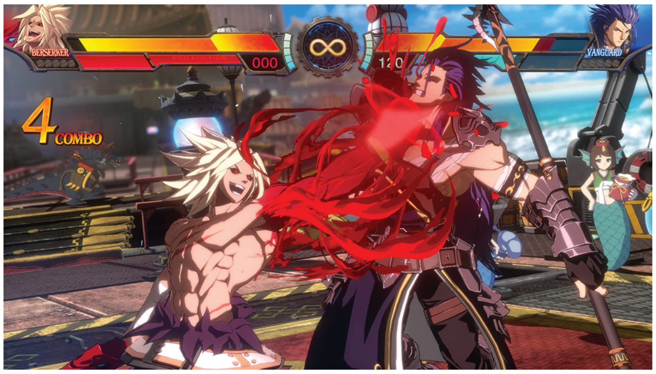
Not only that, the endings render all the relationships Nini has made throughout the game irrelevant, devaluing the game's entire concept.

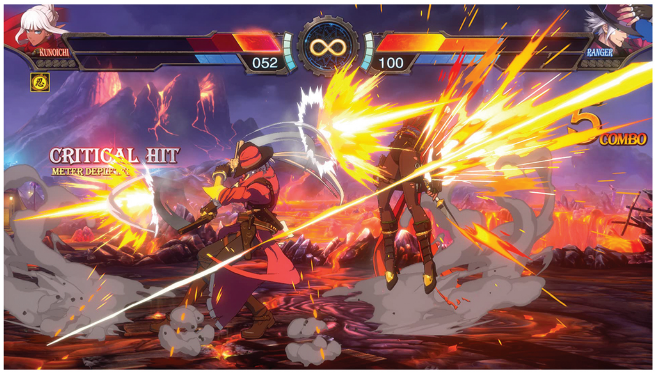
It left me feeling like everything I'd done meant nothing, and wishing that, like Nini, I could go back in time and try something else. **– MAGGIE**

**6.0**

SWITCH PUBLISHER: XSEED
DEVELOPER: MARVELOUS
RATING: T






# NF Takes on DNF

## DNF DUEL

**DNF DUEL IS** a one-on-one fighting game adapted from the Dungeon & Fighter RPG series. Published by Nexon and co-developed by Neople, Eighting and the fighting game wizards at Arc System Works, it was among my favorite games of last year when it first hit other platforms in June 2022. Now that it's finally on Switch, I'm pleased to say the port has arrived in fine shape – even if some concessions had to be made to fit it onto Nintendo's aging hardware.

First off, you don't need to be familiar with Dungeon & Fighter (I certainly wasn't) to make sense of DNF Duel. The four-button system has two kinds of normal attacks, Skills and MP Skills, the latter of which draw from a replenishing magic meter. Special moves can be performed by simply combining your Skills or MP Skills with different directional inputs, giving Duel an almost Smash Bros.-level of accessibility. The game will reward you with faster meter recovery (and potentially longer combos) if you use standard fighting game motion inputs. But it's a subtle perk, and even experienced players may find themselves favoring the simpler inputs in certain situations.

Hitting opponents with regular attacks will turn their life bar white, but it'll take magic attacks to fully wipe that health from the board. This white life can be replenished, or you can burn it with a technique called Conversion, exchanging it for magic and triggering a combo-extending slowdown effect. There are a few other defensive maneuvers, but for the most part, this is an offense-heavy game. Even normal moves often have large hitboxes, and common magic attacks can resemble what would be supers in other fighting games.

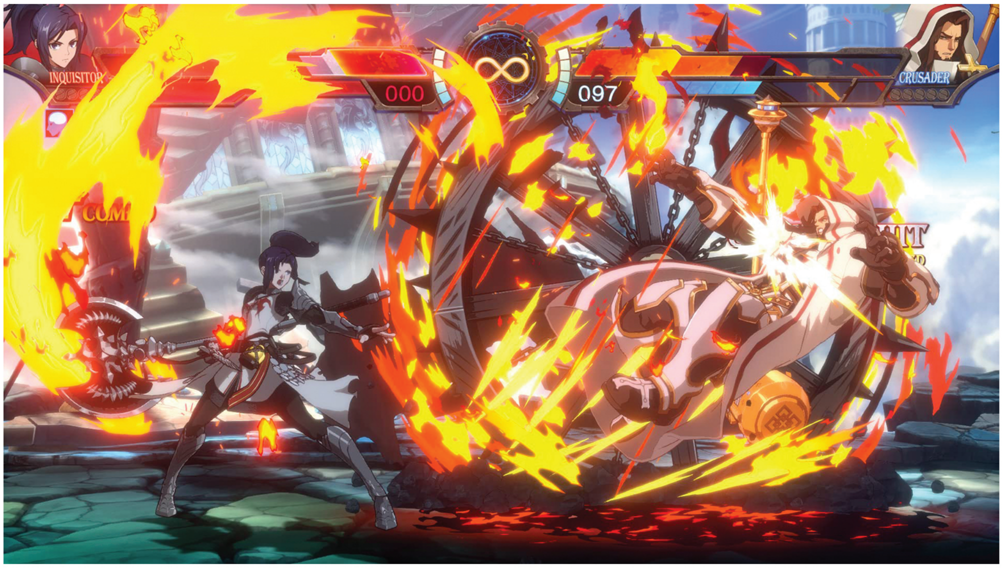
With such power at your disposal, matches are thrilling spectacles, with flashy combos and the potential for sometimes wild comebacks. But you can't just button mash; each character also has clear weaknesses, and savvy play will require smart resource management and a deep knowledge of your impressive toolkit.

Rather than having names, the 16 characters are all different classes from Dungeon & Fighter. There are spellcasters like the Swift Master and Enchantress. There are martial artists like the Striker and Grappler. And there are some who do a bit of everything – like the holy Crusader, who has been blessed with a massive hammer, multiple projectiles and even the ability to summon a wall mid-screen. (Not surprisingly, he's had a lot of success in the competitive scene.)

I chose to main the Launcher, who fights with an assortment of missiles and laser cannons, and I was also drawn to the tricky Kunoichi, since I love a good teleport. But there isn't a bad one in the bunch, and all are brimming with personality. Five new characters are on the way, too, in the coming season of DLC.

The game also looks terrific . . . so it's a shame that this is where the Switch's limitations start to show. While menus and cinematics look fine, character models lack crisp resolution. Also, while my experiences online were mostly seamless, the Switch port does lack the superior rollback netcode of other versions.

At the end of the day, DNF Duel is one of the best new fighting game IPs of the last few years, and it's an easy recommendation. But, while the Switch port is still a lot of fun (and conveniently portable!), know that it is a step down from what you can get on other platforms. **– SEAN**




**8.0**

**SWITCH** PUBLISHER: NEXON DEVELOPERS: ARC SYSTEM WORKS & EIGHTING RATING: T

# A Little Prince Grows Up

## WE LOVE KATAMARI REROLL + ROYAL REVERIE

**KATAMARI DAMACY IS** a David and Goliath story, literally and figuratively. Starring a tiny cosmic prince, the game tasks you to make a sea of stars for your snobby, gaslighting father, and the only way to do it is to roll up miscellaneous debris. The more stuff you fuse to your ball (the "katamari"), the bigger it gets, allowing it to snatch up even larger objects. Before you know it, your initially bite-sized clump of junk is big enough to knock down elephants, skyscrapers . . . and maybe the world.

That's the original premise, but it wasn't fully fleshed out until the sequel. Titled We Love Katamari, this more confident follow-up was a direct response to the success of the first game. Just as in real life, its in-game story is about a variety of people (and a few animals) who love the katamari concept, but aren't sure if it has longevity. Each of them ask the King and his son to make them a specific kind of katamari, which cue them both to try new things. Though there are still some stages about simply growing to a specific size as fast as you can, the bulk of the levels work off of some other theme, like learning to roll underwater, or fattening up a sumo wrestler with meats and sweets until he's rotund enough to become the new Yokozuna.

The wider variety of ways and means to play helped make We Love Katamari an even bigger hit than the first game, taking the fledging series from a one-off anomaly to full-fledged franchise status. Though this was the final Katamari game from series creator Keita Takahashi, it was far from the last we'd see of this cosmic comedy collection. Later titles came out for the Nintendo DS, Xbox 360, PS3, PSP, PS Vita and mobile, not to mention modern consoles like the Switch. The Katamari Prince also made cameos as a driver in Pac-Man World Rally and in Pac-Man's taunt in Super Smash Bros. Ultimate! None of those follow-ups would have happened if it weren't for We Love Katamari. Both in-game and out, it proved that people's appreciation for the series was more than skin-deep.

That sincerity of affection really shines through here. The first Katamari game came off as ironic at times. It had lo-fi graphics, a lounge music-infused soundtrack and a premise that could work as a high-art parody of AAA hits of the era, like Grant Theft Auto: San Andreas and Resident Evil 4. In those games, you get strong enough to take whatever you want from the locals. In Katamari, you do the same thing, but in a much more surreal, ridiculous way.

This sequel is just as funny, if not funnier. A game where you can roll up a flock of seagulls until it's big enough to knock over a gorilla can't help but make you smile. But overall, it's much

SWITCH PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: BANDAI NAMCO RATING: E

more earnest. The racetrack level, where your katamari is suddenly fast enough to catch up to (and ultimately absorb) an F1 racecar, is genuinely exciting. Likewise, a recurring stage where you take to space to wad up entire planets until your clump is big enough to take on the sun, is legitimately beautiful. The theme songs for these stages – a driving, mechanical pop tune and an airy avant-garde techno song, respectively – are both irony-free bangers. Not only did We Love Katamari prove that the series has legs, but it cemented its potential for atmospheric depth and breadth as well.

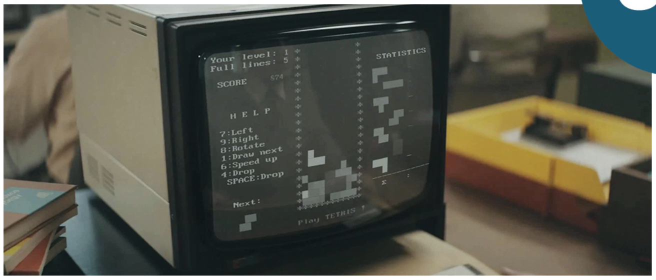
The new content for this rerelease does its best to keep with the theme of expanding horizons. It starts with five remixes of prior stages where you play as the young King, back when he was as small as The Prince. These new-ish levels mostly correspond to the game's classic cutscenes, which focus on the King's upbringing. One takes place at the camp site, but instead of rolling up fireflies or actual fires, you absorb magic fighting energy that's mysteriously floating in the air, which is then used to assault a random martial artist until he runs out of health, Street Fighter-style. Another happens at night school, but you don't collect children or paper cranes. Instead, you have to avoid various types of ghosts as you traverse a maze-like array of desks, searching for five musical instruments.

If that sounds a bit like Pac-Man, that's probably intentional. The other new batch of content for We Love Katamari REROLL relates to multiple mini-crossovers with classic Bandai Namco franchises. Almost every stage hides at least one sticker based on an iconic title from the publisher: Pac-Man, Dragon Spirit, Dig Dug, Ordyne, Wonder Momo, Mr. Driller, Rolling Thunder, Klonoa, Galaga and even Splatterhouse are just a smattering of the bygone games represented here. You collect these stickers by taking a snap of them with an in-game camera. It's a massive challenge, as before now, the Katamari games always rewarded you for being shark-like, constantly moving toward something smaller than you and swallowing it up before time runs out. Camera Mode forces you to stop, breathe, and just look around for a while. Pausing to observe the little details in the big, weird world of Katamari is a whole new way to play.

The only downside of this remaster is that, despite the brighter colors and smoothed-out jaggies, there are occasional instances of pop-up. In a game where the goal is to scan the environment at all times for anything you're big enough to roll over, having objects be temporarily invisible can really mess things up. But that's just one blemish on this otherwise stellar remaster of a pillar of modern gaming. You could say that We Love Katamari did for its predecessor what Tears of the Kingdom did with Breath of the Wild: It expanded on everything that made its prequel unique, while cementing its signature series' style for the foreseeable future.
**– JONATHAN**

**9.5**

8.0



# Everything Doesn't Quite Fall into Place

## TETRIS

**LESS THAN A** week before The Super Mario Bros. Movie began its epic conquest of the global box office, another brand-new video game movie made its debut via the Apple TV+ streaming service: Tetris! Starring Taron Egerton as the globetrotting game creator-turned-rights negotiator Henk Rogers, the film tells the true story of the absolute chaos that surrounded multiple parties fighting to claim the licensing rights to the simple falling-block puzzler that many still hold up as the greatest video game ever made.

. . . There are just a few creative liberties taken in the way this true tale is told.

The film begins with Henk looking a little down on his luck. He's a video game maker in the '80s, but the games he's made aren't attracting a lot of attention – his trade show booth, showcasing his company's simple computer conversion of the ancient board game Go, has not drawn in any attendees. They all seem to be flocking instead to some kind of quirky Russian game. Henk leaves his own booth behind to investigate, sees and plays Tetris for the first time ever, and immediately falls in love . . . with its money-making potential.

Henk enjoys the game, for sure, but his instant interest is how he can get his own piece of its pie. He recognizes on the spot – correctly – that Tetris has incredible profit potential and mass market appeal. And if his company, Bullet-Proof Software, can somehow get the rights to make new versions of Tetris for different hardware platforms, they could leave failed projects like Go in the past and ride the coattails of this other, much more creative game for years to come.

All of that is conveyed well by the film. Greed is a fairly universally understood motivator, after all! But I think Tetris the Movie missed a critical opening scene early on that would have aided the audience's understanding of the 90 minutes or so that followed Henk's first encounter with the game: an explanation of how video game rights even worked in the '80s.

The industry is a bit simpler now, but back then it was still a Wild West of dozens of different companies' computer and console and arcade platforms – and the rights to publish games on all of them could be negotiated for separately. Not only that, but they were divided by country too! So the same game could have its rights split up among several different companies, each of which would make different versions: One might have the rights to make an arcade game in the United States, while another had the rights to do the home console version, but only in Japan. It was an absolute nightmare to navigate, and often led to lawsuits when companies tried to make and sell games on platforms or in countries where they weren't legally allowed to do so. Sometimes those situations were honest mistakes. Other times they were intentional schemes!

The movie dives straight into this quagmire, which, for Tetris in particular, was truly full of drama when these events really played out decades ago. The extra extremely complicating factor was that Tetris was made it Russia – or, at the time, still the Soviet Union – and Henk's travels there to try to sort out the entire tangled mess get muddied up even further by language barriers and oppressive government oversight.

The film's adaptation works when it stays focused on all the natural drama of the rights negotiations, and its portrayals of the rivals Henk had to fight against are great too. (Some real slimeballs tried to nab Tetris for themselves back then!) Where the movie lost me was with its odd, totally fabricated deviations from actual history.

For example, Henk meets up with Nintendo of America's President Minoru Arakawa and famous lawyer, Howard Lincoln, to pitch Tetris to them. And they're wearing lab coats. They bring him into this bright white research room (like something out of Jurassic Park) and introduce him to their secret handheld system still in development: the Game Boy! Henk then sits down with this device he's never seen before, asks one question about the resolution of its screen and programs a working version of Tetris to run on it in about five minutes. I'm sorry, what?

Then there's the scene where Henk meets with Tetris creator Alexey Pajitnov in his home and sees his crude original version of the game for the first time. Henk suggests that he add the feature where more than one line could be cleared at a time, culminating in the coveted four-line clear with the long piece! Except . . . that just didn't happen. Tetris always had multiple line clears from the start – the game wouldn't have even functioned right without them. Why are the filmmakers trying to make Henk Rogers look like some kind of unbelievably talented programming genius? The story doesn't even need that. It's just weird.

Add on some James Bond-esque spy content and a high speed car chase at the film's climax as the cherry on top and you've got a movie that works well enough at telling the true tale of Tetris, but just goes overboard a few too many times to fully ignore. It ends up still being pretty great – just obviously Hollywood-amplified from actual history! If you have access to Apple TV+, it's worth a watch. **– LUCAS**

MOVIE DISTRIBUTED BY: APPLE TV+
PRODUCTION BY: APPLE STUDIOS, AI FILM, MARV STUDIOS, IMAGINE ENTERTAINMENT & UNIGRAM
RATING: R

# ARCHIVE

The complete list of Nintendo Force retail reviews from the last two years. Scores reflect individual reviewers' opinions.

## SWITCH

| TITLE | SCORE | REVIEWER | ISSUE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ace Angler: Fishing Spirits | 6.5 | Rebecca | #63 |
| Advance Wars 1+2: Re-Boot Camp | 9.5 | Lucas | #65 |
| AI: The Somnium Files – nirvanA Initiative | 8.0 | Tony | #62 |
| Alex Kidd in Miracle World DX | 7.5 | David | #54 |
| Atari 50: The Anniversary Celebration | 9.5 | Kris | #64 |
| Atelier Sophie 2: The Alchemist of the Mysterious Dream | 8.0 | Maggie | #59 |
| Bayonetta 3 | 9.0 | Jonathan | #63 |
| Bayonetta Origins: Cereza and the Lost Demon | 8.0 | Jonathan | #65 |
| Big Brain Academy: Brain vs. Brain | 8.0 | Kris | #58 |
| Blue Reflection: Second Light | 8.5 | Maggie | #57 |
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| Dragon Ball Z: Kakarot | 6.0 | Kris | #56 |
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| Mega Man Battle Network Legacy Collection | 8.0 | David | #65 |
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| Metroid Prime Remastered | 10 | Lucas | #64 |
| Miitopia | 7.5 | Brett | #53 |
| MLB The Show 22 | 8.5 | Dan | #59 |
| Monster Hunter Stories 2: Wings of Ruin | 9.0 | Maggie | #54 |
| NEO: The World Ends with You | 8.0 | Rebecca | #55 |
| NERF Legends | 4.0 | Lucas | #57 |
| New Pokémon Snap | 9.0 | Lucas | #53 |
| Ni no Kuni II: Revenant Kingdom – Prince's Edition | 8.5 | Brett | #56 |
| Nickelodeon All-Star Brawl | 7.5 | Brett | #56 |
| Nickelodeon Kart Racers 3: Slime Speedway | 8.0 | David | #63 |
| No More Heroes III | 9.5 | Jonathan | #55 |
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| Pac-Man Museum+ | 8.5 | Kris | #60 |
| Pac-Man World Re-Pac | 7.5 | Lucas | #62 |
| Pokémon Brilliant Diamond | 6.5 | Rebecca | #57 |
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| Record of Lodoss War: Deedlit in Wonder Labyrinth | 8.0 | Jonathan | #60 |
| Rune Factory 5 | 7.5 | Maggie | #59 |
| Shadowverse: Champion's Battle | 8.0 | Maggie | #55 |
| Shin Megami Tensei V | 8.0 | Meghan | #57 |
| Sonic Colors: Ultimate | 5.0 | Kris | #58 |
| Sonic Frontiers | 7.0 | Tony | #64 |
| Splatoon 3 | 9.0 | Lucas | #62 |
| Story of Seasons: Pioneers of Olive Town | 6.5 | Rebecca | #53 |
| Super Monkey Ball: Banana Mania | 8.5 | David | #56 |
| Taiko no Tatsujin: Rhythm Festival | 8.0 | J.-Charles | #63 |
| Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Shredder's Revenge | 10 | Lucas | #60 |
| Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Cowabunga Collection | 9.0 | David | #62 |
| The Caligula Effect 2 | 8.0 | Maggie | #58 |
| The Great Ace Attorney Chronicles | 9.0 | Rebecca | #54 |
| The Legend of Heroes: Trails from Zero | 9.0 | Maggie | #62 |
| The Legend of Heroes: Trails to Azure | 10 | Maggie | #65 |
| The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword HD | 9.0 | Lucas | #54 |
| Theatrhythm Final Bar Line | 9.0 | J.-Charles | #65 |
| Transformers: Battlegrounds | 7.5 | Lucas | #54 |
| Triangle Strategy | 9.0 | Nadia | #59 |
| WarioWare: Get It Together! | 7.5 | Rebecca | #56 |
| World's End Club | 6.5 | Kris | #55 |
| Wunderling DX | 8.0 | Lucas | #64 |
| Xenoblade Chronicles 3 | 10 | Maggie | #62 |
| Ys IX: Monstrum Nox | 9.0 | Lucas | #55 |

## REVIEW REMINDER
## PIKMIN 3 DELUXE

**WITH PIKMIN RETURNED** to the position of Nintendo's most prominent property (at least while the company's trying to hype potential customers up for its newest sequel launch), it's a good time to look back on the previous installment in the series on the Switch to give any unconvinced audience members of ours one more push of encouragement to try it out!

Back in NF #50, I declared that Pikmin 3 Deluxe was "the perfect Pikmin package." I was enamored with its many improvements to the original Wii U version – a game that I had already adored, since I'd scored it as a 9.5 all the way back in NF #5 in 2013! In fact, I replayed the entire Pikmin 3 main story on the Wii U before jumping into Pikmin 3 Deluxe on Switch, and I wrote about that experience in NF #49, so make sure you start there if you're flipping back through your NF back catalog to re-read my full evaulation!

I ultimately ended up declaring Deluxe a 9.5 as well, stopping just short of awarding a perfect 10 since it disappointingly didn't address one lingering story point that I'd hoped it world: the mysterious reason why the heroes of Pikmin 3 crashed on Planet PNF-404 in the first place. At the time, I looked to the future to hope that Pikmin 4 might be the game to fill in that final plot hole, but that seems unlikely now that we know the new Switch sequel will star a totally new cast of captains.

Still, that was my only complaint about Pikmin 3 Deluxe, which I still fully recommend for any and all potential Pikmin players! It has an excellent control scheme that streamlined the Wii U's juggling act of three different controllers (GamePad, Wii Remote & Nunchuk) into a more focused form easily playable with a single Pro Controller or pair or Joy-Cons. It generously updated the strict Mission Mode to allow players to complete each Mission in full, when the Wii U original cut off the action when the countdown clock ended and kicked players back to the menu. It added great new Olimar story missions too, with a bunch of unique gameplay ideas never seen before! It really went above and beyond as a Wii U-to-Switch port, and I think everyone should play it! **– LUCAS**

# COMMUNITY

Super Mario 64 · Super Mario 64 DS · Project: Pipe Dream (Orthographic)

Doki Doki Panic · Super Mario Bros. 2 · Super Mario USA · Super Mario Bros. 2 / Doki Doki Panic · Super Mario All-Stars · Project: Pipe Dream (Orthographic)

3D MODELING & ANIMATION

# Presenting Project: Pipe Dream!

## Giving the modern Mario treatment to some little guys from past games that Nintendo seems to have forgotten.

**IT'S TOUGH TO** be a Mario baddy. Sure, some of them go on to be iconic – we've had Goombas and Koopa Troopas and Piranha Plants galore ever since the '80s. But for every foe who manages to earn an encore in a later game, there are dozens who get left in the past.

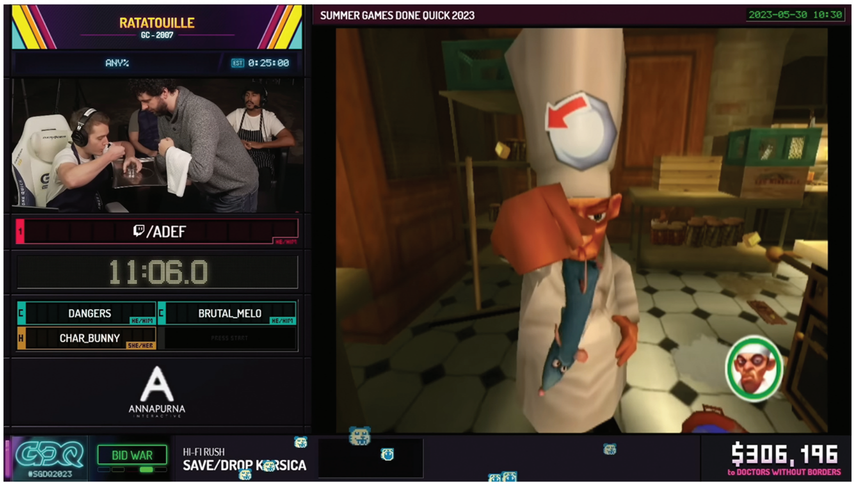
Well, one artist is fighting back against that injustice! Omni Jacala – whom we've previously featured for his work like faking the Smash Rayman leak and helping reimagine Mother 3 in a modern clay animation style – is bringing old baddies back!

With Project: Pipe Dream, Omni is taking enemy characters from old Mario games and sprucing them up with brand-new 3D models and animation. His efforts so far have been focused on forgotten cast members from Super Mario Bros. 2/Doki Doki Panic, like the Flurry seen above and the Pidgit and Tweeter below. But he's also remade others, like the flower child Spindrift from Super Mario 64!

He's also adding a bit of extra character here and there: His take on SMB2's Bob-omb (below), is named "Bab-omb" and has her own sense of style!

While print magazine pages can only present still images for your eyes to behold, most of Omni's creations are fully animated if you visit his Twitter account for the project and scroll through the feed. I wonder which little guy will be next? **– LUCAS**

@MarioPipeDream




SPEEDRUNNING FOR CHARITY

# SUMMER GAMES DONE QUICK 2023

## Did our team have fun at GDQ's latest event? Yes, chef!

**SGDQ 2023 RECENTLY** recently wrapped up in Minnesota, the land of a thousand malls, raising over $2,000,000 for Doctors Without Borders in the process. For the uninitiated, Games Done Quick is a semi-annual speedrunning charity event where highly skilled players complete games in front of a live audience (both in person and remotely over a livestreamed feed) as quickly as possible to help raise funds for a noble cause.

Of course, "completion" can mean anything from simply reaching the end credits in Super Mario 64 as per normal to skillfully launching Mario backwards, pixel by pixel, so fast that he's launched through the world's geometry, skipping half the game!

Scenes like this play out in front of an enthusiastic crowd every summer – and winter – during weeklong round-the-clock events. SGDQ 2023 was held in Minneapolis starting this past Memorial Day weekend, hosting many unforgettable speedruns throughout.

One of the highlights was an impressive Majora's Mask randomized speedrun, shuffling around every item in the game (for example a treasure chest could randomly contain any item ranging from a Piece of Heart to a critical transformation mask) with crowd-favorite runner SpikeVegeta returning to the stage to take on the challenge.

Another run that saw a great turnout was recent indie hit Pizza Tower, absolutely demolished on the stage for the first time, with donors chiming in with their spiciest pizza topping opinions. And speaking of food, there's always an unexpected meme-setting standout to the show, and this year was no exception thanks to an intense playthrough of Ratatouille on the GameCube.

The manic energy of a virtual rat rush around a digital kitchen at top speed was memorialized by runner adef and his team of commentators, each dressed in aprons and punctuating every comment with an affirmative "Yes, chef!" The infectious camaraderie of this run resulted in "Yes, chef!" transforming into the catchphrase of the whole event for the rest of week.

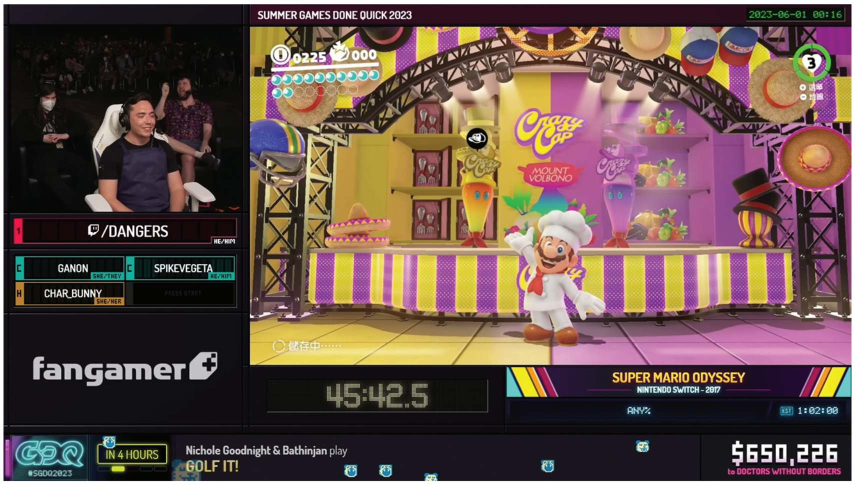
This is just a taste of the hype that fuels SGDQ for its entire length (along with ample free cans of energy drinks provided by sponsor Red Bull), visible both on the stream and at the event itself. If you missed out on this year's fun, don't even sweat – you can find every run from SGDQ 2023 and past events as free video-on-demand archives on their official Twitch and YouTube channels.

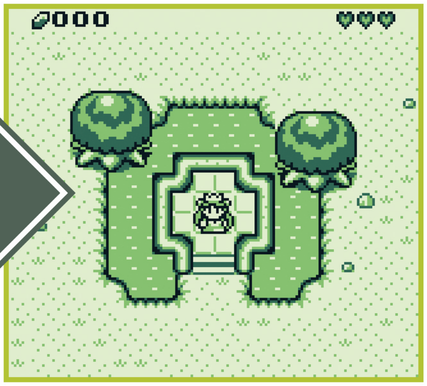
For those attending these GDQ events live, they're always a true sight to behold. The energy of each speedrunning team is truly palpable in person, often with their supportive Discord communities cheering them on from the audience. A few members of the Nintendo Force crew were present this year and we had a blast seeing the gaming community coming together once again for a great cause. Who knows, maybe we'll even see you there next year if you decide to attend too!

GDQ frequently hosts practice Hotfix streams and mini-events throughout the year, so if you've never seen what a professional speedrun looks like, something's always happening on their Twitch channel to ignite a need for speed within you. Or if you think you've got what it takes to speedrun live on stage, there are ways to get involved and get in touch with the many open communities dedicated to mastering any game you can imagine.

Yes, even that one! **– JOHN-CHARLES**

GamesDoneQuick.com

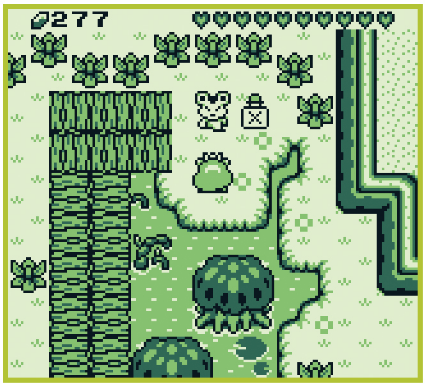




GB STUDIO GAME REVIEW

# ZELDA'S ADVENTURE

## The Zelda series' least-loved CD-i spin-off has been remade for Game Boy!



**TOWARD THE END** of 2020, YouTube meme connoisseurs were treated to fan remasters of Link: The Faces of Evil and Zelda: The Wand of Gamelon, the infamous CD-i duology that stained the Zelda franchise's otherwise unblemished history. But wasn't there a third piece of this corrupted Triforce? Where was Zelda's Adventure?

Unlike the first two titles, Zelda's Adventure more closely resembled traditional top-down Zeldas. It also lacked the more endearing, meme-worthy elements – crudely hand-drawn cutscenes, comically exaggerated voice acting, jaunty synth pop music – that gave those earlier CD-i wares any merit at all. Forget so-bad-it's-good: Zelda's Adventure was just plain bad!

But that didn't stop amateur developer John Lay from attempting a green-tinted demake built using homebrew-creation tool GB Studio! The benefits of this decision are immediate: By ditching the digitized actors and real-world scenery in favor of pixel art sourced from Zelda's handheld catalog (plus a handful of custom sprites), screen readability is improved exponentially. Meanwhile, the excruciatingly long screen transitions from the RAM-starved original give way to much speedier navigation.

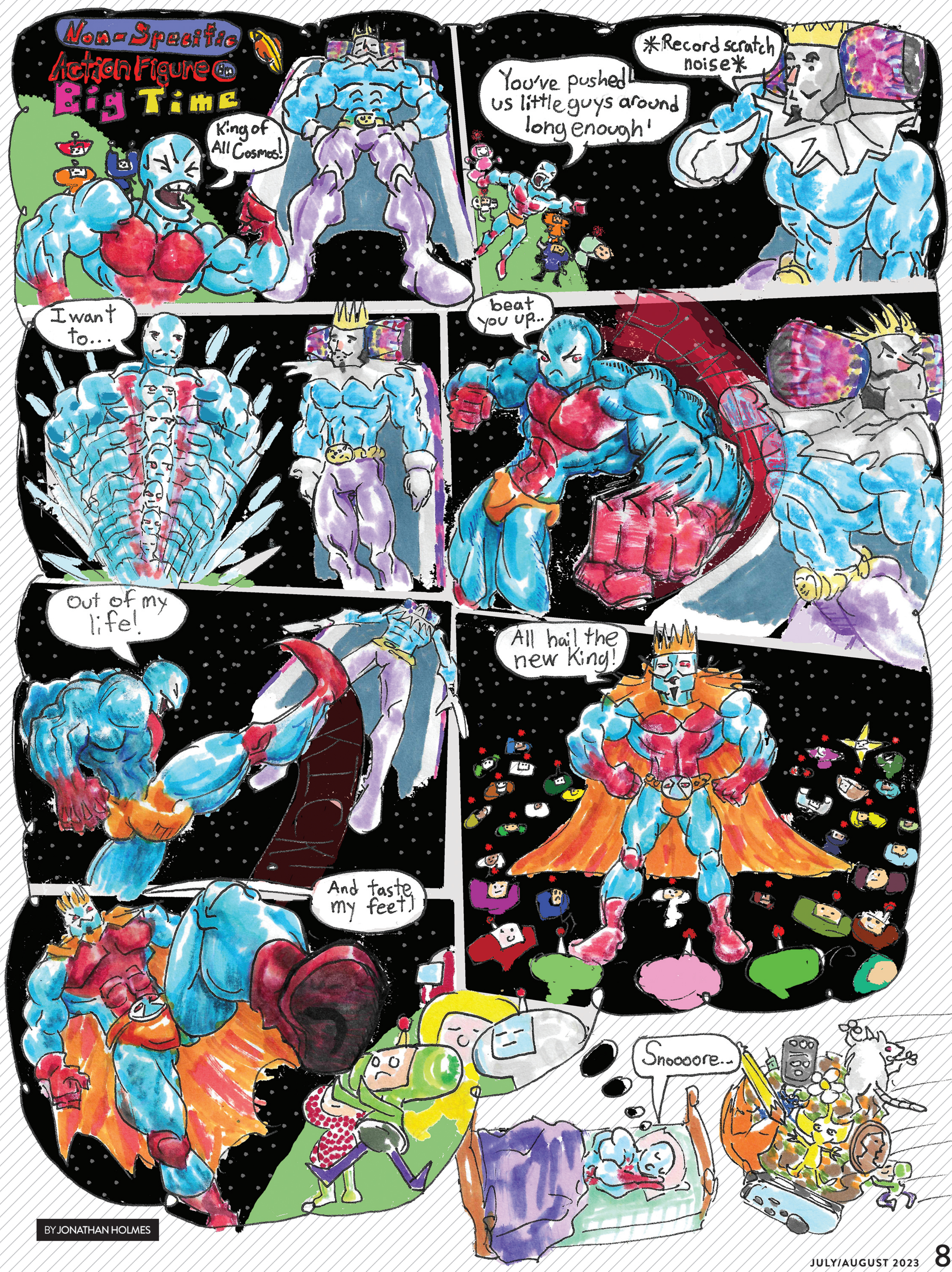
Though the original failed to inspire the kind of joyful discovery that the canon series is best known for, Lay elected for better or worse to remain faithful to its controls, map layouts and item management. Dungeons are devoid of any puzzle-solving; acquired weapons are variations of ranged projectiles, with no utility outside of battle; compasses don't reveal treasure rooms, but instead activate fast travel to dungeon entrances; and a handful of monsters are impervious to all attacks, save from some random tool whose purpose is never properly explained.

In addition to the "quirks" inherited from the source material, Lay introduced a few of his own. Rather than through hitstun flash or recoil, damage feedback is presented via a thought bubble above Zelda's head. A heart indicates that her attack rang true, while a popping vein means that the enemy landed a blow – but it's only after a second-long delay that the hit actually registers, resulting in very mushy combat. Worse yet, Lay's version fills the silence of the original's overworld with a grating arrangement of Link's Awakening's sword-searching tune, while also failing to incorporate any sound effects whatsoever. Even worse still, pausing to view the map or browse your inventory respawns every enemy on the current screen!

I don't want to rag on Lay too much, as his efforts to translate Zelda's Adventure into a more accessible format are still worthy of your consideration. Before you launch your favorite emulator or whip out the Everdrive to play on real Game Boy hardware, however, be wary of such persistent game-breaking bugs as crashes triggered by attacking monsters too aggressively, the disappearance of in-game text, missing shop items and save file corruptions. You're guaranteed to encounter most of these no matter how cautiously you play, thereby necessitating save state scumming to minimize lost progress. It's an annoying workaround for a game that wouldn't be all that compelling even if it ran flawlessly.

Lay has every intention of patching the bugs that players report, so good on him. But the harsh reality is that Zelda's Adventure requires a far more comprehensive overhaul than one fan can provide. **– TONY**

john-lay.itch.io




BY JONATHAN HOLMES

# NEXT ISSUE

Wait! There are more little heroes on the horizon!

We've just received word that a small band of woodland creatures is valiantly fighting back against the schemes of an enormous egg-shaped scientist! Could a team of tiny forest friends ever hope to prevail against the sinister designs of man? They could if they run really, really fast!

Yes, "The Sonic Cycle" is spinning into action once again, as Sega has just recently revealed **Sonic Superstars**, and already the early hype is getting out of hand. We'll take our own first look at the Hedgehog's latest and . . . huh? Wait again! There's also a report coming in of a brand-new **Super Mario Bros.** too? Are we gearing up for a classic clash of Mario vs. Sonic?! Don't miss NF #67!

## IN THE WORKS FOR ISSUE #67:

**SONIC SUPERSTARS**

**SUPER MARIO BROS. WONDER**

**SONIC ORIGINS PLUS**

**LUIGI'S MANSION: DARK MOON** COMES TO SWITCH!

**PRINCE OF PERSIA:** THE LOST CROWN

**PIKMIN 4**

**THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:** TEARS OF THE KINGDOM **SECOND OPINIONS**

**THE LEGEND OF HEROES:** TRAILS INTO REVERIE

**SUPER MARIO RPG**

**DOUBLE DRAGON GAIDEN:** RISE OF THE DRAGONS

**EVERYBODY 1-2-SWITCH!**

**SEA OF STARS**

**GHOST TRICK:** PHANTOM DETECTIVE

**STORY OF SEASONS:** A WONDERFUL LIFE

AND MUCH **MORE!**

***SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER 2023***

# YA-HA-HA! YOU FOUND ME!

**ANOTHER NF ISSUE** is coming to an end, but let's feature just one more little guy before we wrap things up. It's the newest Nintendo toy to be added to the mix in the Thomas home: Yahaha the Korok!

After playing Tears of the Kingdom for just a few days — with my kids sitting alongside me on the couch and taking in every moment of Daddy's adventure — I noted their love of the kooky little Korok characters. I mean, how could they not adore those adorable little hide-and-seekers? They could be hiding under a rock. On top of a mountain. Just around any corner! There are hundreds of them, after all. They're everywhere!

Well, I had the thought that we could maybe replicate a little bit of that magic in our home. So I ordered the squishy, huggable plush Korok from the Club Mocchi-Mocchi product line (several online retailers carry it), and every day since it arrived, I've hidden it in a different hiding place somewhere around the house. Every day the boys get to search high and low to find the little guy, and whichever one emerges victorious in the hunt gets rewarded! (Not with a seed, but with a few extra minutes of video game time.) It's become a fun new family activity that you may want to try if your own home has some little ones running around underfoot! **— LUCAS**

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